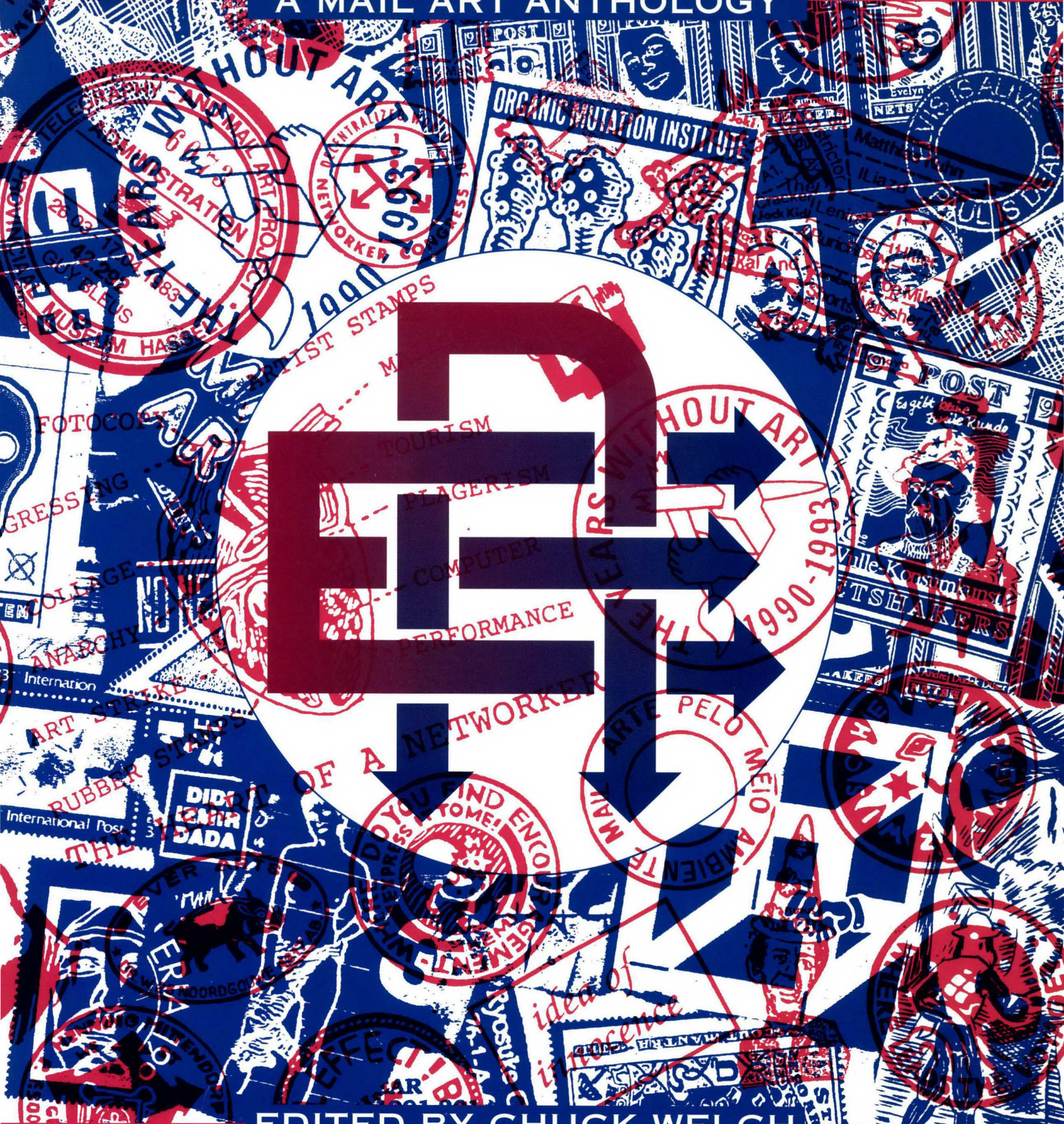
ETERNAL NETWORK

A MAIL ART ANTHOLOGY



EDITED BY CHUCK WELCH

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY PRESS

ETERNAL NETWORK
A MAIL ART ANTHOLOGY

PUBLICATIONS BY THE EDITOR

NETWORKING CURRENTS: Contemporary Mail Art Subjects and Issues
BLACKJAX: A Folio of Artists' Stamps
THE AMBASSADOR STAMP ALBUM: Documentation of the Pan-American Mail Art Expedition
SPRING GARDEN: A Mail Art Installation Bookwork with David Cole, Sheril Cunning, and Marilyn R. Rosenberg
NETSHAKER: A Mail Art Networker Zine

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First published 1995

University of Calgary Press
2500 University Drive N.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Eternal Network

Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 1-895176-27-1

1. Mail art. 2. Art, Modern–20th century. I. Welch, Chuck.
N6494.M35E83 1994 709'.04 C94-910672-0

Cover and section designs by Piermario Cianni

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Printed and bound in Canada.

Eternal Network is dedicated to the memory of

Jean Brown
1911–1994

friend of mail art

ETERNAL NETWORK

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I was writing *Networking Currents* in 1985 I designated a new, inclusive spirit emerging from mail art: the artist as networker. Out of the confusing, cluttered, chaotic, contradictory individualism of mail art I was fascinated by artists examining what they communicated, hearing what they read, seeing what was heard, questioning the past while questing together for a future vision. In mail art networking a global consciousness and philosophy was emerging, and just in time.

Today, with the persistent threat of censors condemning the arts, and a growing peril of sexism, racism, and nationalism, our survival depends upon a creative vision that cuts through all cultures. In this spirit, *Eternal Network* offers a challenge to mail artists for finding constructive, common accord. I acknowledge this call will find criticism by those individuals who portray mail art as a raucous, devil-may-care world without ethics or values.

The many provocative, personal voices of essayists in *Eternal Network* reflect sensibilities that may be at variance with the reader's preconceptions of a correct form or style appropriate to a university press. Texts such as Rosemary Gahlinger-Beaune's intimate eulogy of her mail art friend Michael Bidner and Bern Porter's "Interconnection" are "letters" to the reader which underscore the spirit of Robert Filliou's poetic vision. A few essayists have chosen colloquial styles of writing while others present blunt opinions that would challenge the most liberal of editors. Since mail artists often associate censorship with editing, I have taken great care to preserve the subject variety and tone of each text.

All subjects cannot be entirely bound, examined, or solved in this book. This is not my purpose or desire. Rather I have shaped the content of this anthology through my interactive participation with pivotal figures and events of mail art in the 1980s and 1990s. Through the varigated accounts of forty-two other essayists, *Eternal Network* offers a wide range of networking sensibilities.

Some would argue that humor is an essential ingredient, indeed the central spirit of mail art as communication. While humor is not lacking in sections of this publication, it is only one aspect of the complex, vibrant and diverse phenomenon of international mail art. Trusting that more books on such topics by mail artists will emerge, I have proceeded with a focus on mail art networking and networkers.

Throughout forty-eight months of collaboration, *Eternal Network: A Mail Art Anthology* grew from correspondence, translations, and resource materials provided by essayists in this anthology and from my own Eternal Network Archive. A notable outgrowth of this networking process is the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992, (NC92) a proposal first set forth in H.R. Fricker's essay contribution (1990) to *Eternal Network*. The purpose of NC92 was to define the role of the networker, a partial objective I undertook in forming the *Eternal Network* anthology. Because the networker congresses were enormous in their scale and scope of objectives, time and space limits thorough documentation of NC92 in this anthology. Readers interested in acquiring NC92 documentation can find prominent sources listed in various chapters and in Appendix 6 of *Eternal Network*.

The progress of this book ran parallel to the North American recession and soon it was evident that institutional or corporate foundation support was nearly non-existent. The publication of *Eternal Network* has been assured by mail art's

most generous patrons: fellow mail artists around the world. Without their monetary and spiritual support *Eternal Network* would have failed to materialize.

I wish to express my gratitude to the following mail art networkers for their collaborative spirit, trust, patience and encouragement. To my readers Marilyn R. Rosenberg, David Cole, Maxie Snell, Annie Wittels, Charlton Burch, Ken Friedman, and Owen Smith, thanks for your suggestions and help with editing texts. Estera Milman, Henning Mittendorf, Ken Friedman, Anna Banana, Guy Bleus, and John Held; your lists, photographs, references, and advice were valuable resources.

Individuals at the following institutional archives and collections generously assisted in gathering either data, artwork, and/or photographic resource material for this book: Clive Phillpot, Director of the Library, Museum of Modern Art, New York City; Estera Milman, Director, and James Lewes, Project Assistant, Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa; Marcia Reed, Curator of Rare Books, Special Collections at The Getty Center, Santa Monica, California; Ruth and Marvin Sackner, The Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry, Miami Beach, Florida; Timothy Rub, Director of The Hood Museum of Art, and the Hood Registrar Kellen G. Haak, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

My appreciation to Marianne Filliou for providing an unpublished photograph of her late husband Robert Filliou. A photograph of Robert Filliou was generously provided by Barbara Moore and her late husband Peter Moore. An equally important unpublished photograph by American photographer Bill Hayward (*Portrait of Jean Brown*) was offered from the private collection of Bob Brown, son of the late Jean Brown. A notable portrait of Ray Johnson was provided by New York photographer Timothy Greenfield–Saunders. My thanks to *The London Free Press* Collection of Photographic Negatives, D.B. Weldon Library at The University of Western Ontario in locating photographic portraits of Canadian stamp artist Michael Bidner. Camera–ready copy for most graphics in *Eternal Network* was prepared by Randy Roesler at Bethel, Vermont and the Hood Art Museum, Hanover, New Hampshire. Cover design and section layout was prepared by the prominent Italian networker and commercial artist Piermario Ciani. All illustrations in this anthology, unless otherwise noted by caption, are part of Chuck Welch's personal mail art collection, The Eternal Network Mail Art Archive, Hanover, New Hampshire.

Special acknowledgment for financial support in the production of this book go to the late Jean Brown, and to Ruth and Marvin Sackner of The Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry, Miami Beach, Florida.

INTRODUCTIONS

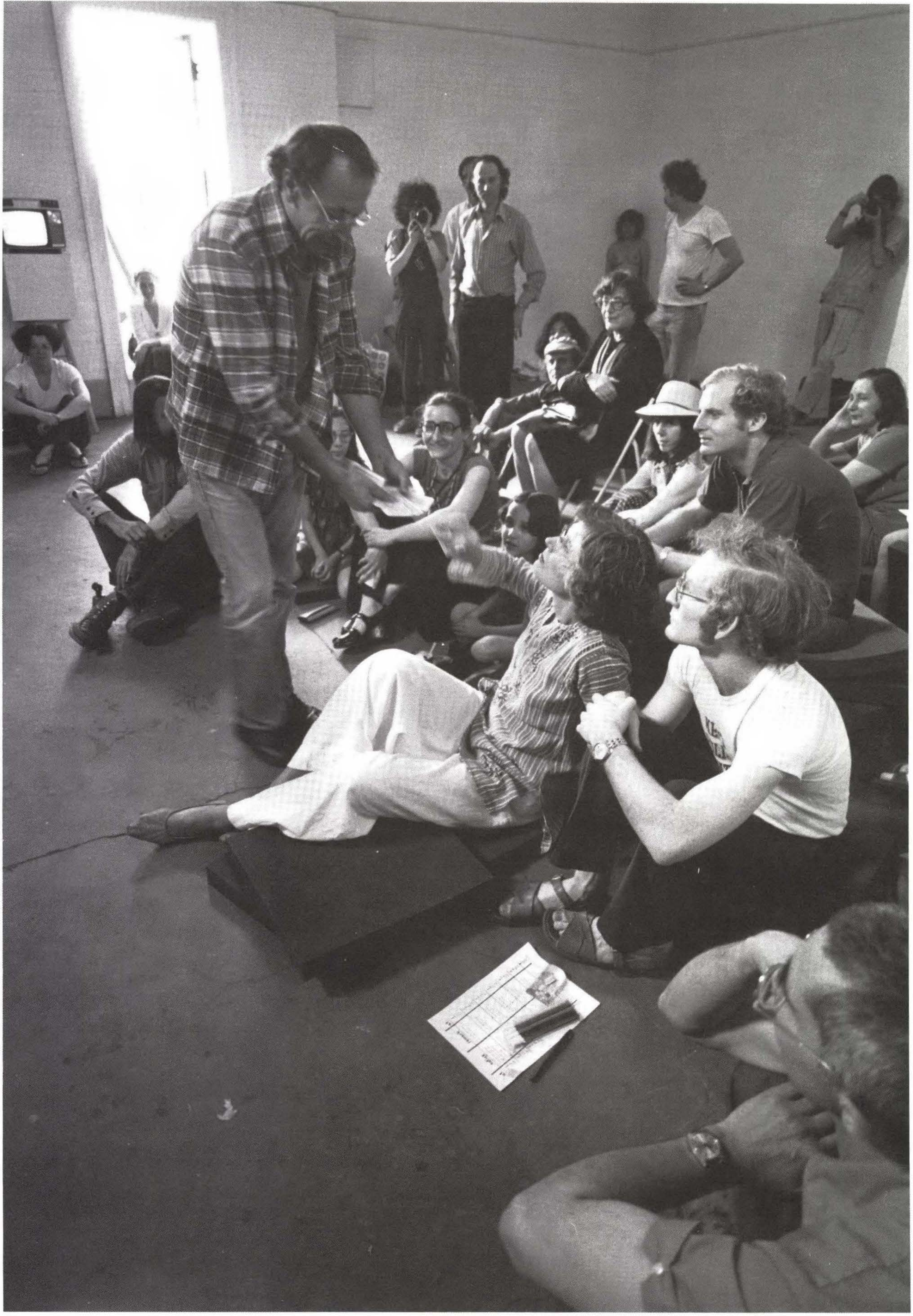


Figure 1. Robert Filliou, *Robert Filliou Performing Telepathic Music #3 in New York City*, 1976. Performance. Photograph © Peter Moore.

FOREWORD
THE ETERNAL NETWORK

Ken Friedman

When Robert Filliou developed his concept of "The Eternal Network," he was thinking of the human condition rather than of art (Fig. 2). Filliou held that the purpose of art was to make life more important than art. That was the central idea of the Eternal Network.

In the years since Filliou coined the term, it has taken on a life of its own. The Eternal Network has come to signify a global community of people who stand for many of the ideas Filliou cherished. This community is fluid, comprised of people who may never meet one another in person, and who do not always agree on their concepts of life and art. Those facts don't diminish the reality of an on-going community. This is a community of people who exchange ideas, who work together in dialogue, and who have been doing so for over three decades. The Eternal Network is an unusual global village, a village created for people who don't often meet precisely because they cannot meet often. From the early 1960s, using the postal system, the Eternal Network foreshadowed other networks that would become possible later through the use of such technologies as computer, telefax and electronic mail. But Filliou wasn't thinking of the mail, or of a medium. He was contemplating spiritual values.

For Filliou, as for many of us, art was not a matter of technique. A lack of interest in technique was common to many of the experimental artists of the 1960s. For artists as similar—and as different—as George Maciunas, Henry Flynt, Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys, Joseph Kosuth, Milan Knizak, Dick Higgins, Christo, Mieko Shiomi, or Lawrence Weiner, technique was secondary to conception. Intention, idea, inward reality were foremost. Technique was merely a means of realizing ideas, of making ideas real.

Art that begins in ideas is not always easy for the art-world to accept. Art that rejects technique or selects technique solely according to the message at hand may not be recognized as art. It exists for different purposes than most art-it exists for the message it carries, solely for the ideas it embodies. It is often an art created (or even invented) by people who don't know classical technique and who don't know enough about any medium to know what can't be done.

That was the great hope of the era in which mail art was born. It was the exciting era of the artists who had studied with John Cage at the famous New School classes, the era in which Fluxus, happenings and concept art had their beginning. It was a time when the boundaries of art were sometimes stretched so far that they became invisible.

Sometimes it seemed that being invisible to the art-world was a problem, a challenge to our abilities, our intelligence, our creativity. But there was a blessing in the challenge: we were free to do as we pleased. It is the nature of a paradigm shift to be invisible to those who view the world from the context of a different paradigm. The experimental and radical nature of artists working in the context of the Eternal Network rendered us invisible to the art-world.

The art-world neglected us, ignoring even those who tried to bridge the chasm of communication between the two world views. It meant we had a great freedom; it meant that there were no boundaries. If we weren't permitted to play the game that then defined the art-world, we were not obliged to play by the rules of the game.

Any discussion of the Eternal Network, of correspondence art or mail art, must be a discussion of art to some degree. It is worth investigating the differences and key issues. The Eternal Network posited interesting oppositions to prevailing art-world ideology. The art-world placed great stress on individual performance, on the notion of the master, on creating masterworks or masterpieces. The Eternal Network placed its stress on dialogue, even on the multilog, the process of group research and the community of discourse. In some ways, the ideas and works that emerged from the network more closely resembled scientific research than art. Filliou and Brecht presented group works, collaborative works, and works by many artists at La Cedille; Fluxus presented group projects along with individual works emerging from the dialogues and multilogs of the group; the mail art network was a forum for palimpsests and projects that took their final form through the work of many individuals; the idea of conceptual art made the object at least somewhat irrelevant, if not as immaterial as the rhetoric of the era sometimes proposed; works from scores or proposals meant that anyone could create the work, just as musicians realize a work from its score.

Much great art grows out of dialogue. It is not only the work of the individual genius working in solitude who creates and innovates—it is the individual genius working in social context, responding to others and to the times. The idea of the avant-garde is obsolete. Filliou stated that the discourse of human achievement had grown so great, even by the early 1960s, that it was no longer possible for one person to command all knowledge in any field. If that is so, he reasoned, then it can no longer be said who is in the avant-garde and who is in the rear, who the leader and who the follower. Filliou proposed a radical equality as the basis for genuine, artistic achievement.

If mail art began in an era of radical ferment, it came soon to have its own history. At first, the network was a private phenomenon, used by and parallel to the experimental groups of artists who were its creators, Nouveau Realisme, the New York Correspondence School and Fluxus. Fluxus carried the private phenomenon outward, creating an open forum for exchange. The public exchange took on a life of its own as a group of artists emerged who thought of themselves in great part as correspondence artists or mail artists. Finally, this network of artists developed a community, an ethos, and in some ways, a series of rules and boundaries, even the very kinds of boundaries that mail art was created to escape. Between the mid-'50s and the end of the 1980s, mail art went through what now seem to be four distinct periods or phases.

Over the last five or six years, something interesting has been taking place in the mail art network. The private history of mail art has become public once again. The rules and boundaries have softened into respectful debate and the appreciation of differences. Debates have increased in intelligence and intensity while diminishing in emotional charge. The dialogues shed more light and less heat.

The erosion of barriers between nation-states, the growth of new communications media, the conscious discussion of community have given rise to new global dialogue. Even a notable love-hate relationship with the art-world has softened, transformed into a sometimes wistful and sometimes creative willingness to engage art in debate without being tied to the art market.

When Chuck Welch asked me to write the foreword to this book, he described it in spiritual terms, using language that reminded me of the approach Robert Filliou envisioned. I felt that something important had taken place.

Welch's book and the articles in it are evidence of another exciting moment in time. In terms of the history of a medium,

it may signal the end of one phase and the beginning of another: the stress on spiritual values and human relations, on community and contact suggests a dramatic shift of concerns for the mail art network. But while this book sheds light on the history of contemporary art, of one form of contemporary art, it is not a book about art history. It is, rather, an illustrated philosophy. Its pages show something of where the network has been—the meanings and sources, the differences between the phenomenon variously termed *correspondence art, mail art, communications art, networking* and now (as the artists visit one another) *tourism.* There is a marvelous human quality to these efforts, even — as we see in Art Strike — a willingness to put art aside in order to renew its social purpose.

Chuck Welch considers this book an invitation. Through its pages, the multilog of many authors, he sets out to invite us into the network, to awaken us to the opportunity of global communication, to rekindle a sense of the spiritual potential of art. These are big goals. They are realistic, too, as only visionary goals can be.

The network has already influenced the larger world on several occasions. It has provided a sub-text to the open and visible work of many painters and sculptors. It has been a communication channel of global networks for direct democracy and for such projects as Joseph Beuy's Free International University. It has invited the citizen into the museum. It has taken the museum into the mail box.

These artists have goals bigger than they can achieve today, but who is to say what goals are too large to achieve tomorrow? The way to achieve great dreams is to begin by giving them a voice. That's what Robert Filliou did best, and that's why Filliou would have understood this book perfectly.

* * * * * *

INTRODUCTION
THE ETHEREAL OPEN AESTHETIC

Chuck Welch

"Mail art is not Fine Art, it is the artist who is fine!" So proclaims Swiss mail artist Hans Ruedi Fricker and legions of like-minded mail artists who believe in process art aesthetics, which include inter-action, inter-connection, cooperation and global collaboration. Mail artists were "working locally and thinking globally" long before that phrase became an important social call for the world citizens of the 1990s.

The mail art phenomenon isn't a new fad or a fashion of the art market. Mail art represents a thirty-year-old utopian tradition of exchange which has included such internationally renowned artists as Yoko Ono, Carl Andre, Christo, Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik, Joseph Beuys, and Dick Higgins, among others. Why has mail art remained an enigma to the American art establishment? As important art critics such as Lucy Lippard and Suzi Gablik call for a socially engaged international art paradigm, mail art is ignored.

Mail art networking is an enormous, pluralistic, global communication phenomenon. Senders and recipients from around the world daily exchange expressive, provocative mail by recycling the contents and altering the surfaces of mailing tubes, envelopes and parcels. In time, these original, collaged surfaces resemble layered palimpsests of artist postage stamps, rubber-stamped images, cryptic messages, and slogans. Mail art networking, however, encompasses and exceeds alteration and manipulation of material sent by international post. Creative communication by concepts, visual symbols, signs and languages is a prime objective that influences the way artists use media like papermaking, painting, audio, video, computers, artist books, electrostatic copy art (Xerox), stamp art, zines and performance art.

Within this continual, networking process of conceptual transformation and exchange, the incredible collage of global expression emerges. Mail artist and librarian John Held believes mail art is a hidden secret because "... the genre demands involvement. To know mail art is to experience mail art."[1] Indeed, mail art has a curious way of reversing traditional art definitions. As the mailbox replaces the museum, the address becomes the art. The mailman carries the avant-garde between networking artists.

Eternal Network is an anthology, a reference work, and a chronicle of contemporary events, but equally important, it is a conduit, connection, and invitation to interact with artists who are networkers. *Eternal Network* unlocks the hidden, marginal, ephemeral domain of international mail art by offering historians, critics, archivists, curators, artists, and the public a key to understand mail art networking, its aesthetics, issues and criticism. In a larger context, *Eternal Network* is a networker anthology of essays gathered by fax, teleconferencing and mail exchanges between the editor and forty-four artists from seventeen countries on five continents; *Eternal Network* is contemporary process aesthetics in action. An historical perspective, however, is needed if we are to understand the aesthetic basis for much of the contemporary networker activity which underscores the essays in this anthology.[2]

The "Eternal Network" is a traditional expression often used in the vast, pluralistic international mail art world. "Networking" and "networker"[3] are terms mail and telecommunication artists prefer for identifying their activities of cross-cultural, collaborative exchanges. The origin

of the term *eternal network* can be traced to 1963 when the poetic visionary creator Robert Filliou coined it to describe "the marriage of art and life."[4] Filliou defined the eternal network as "the lasting interconnection of spiritual events, whether animal, vegetable, mineral or thought energy."[5] Michael Crane, artist and director of the University of Colorado art galleries, states that the eternal network is an "appropriate reference for the positive, spiritual qualities and communication potentials of correspondence art."[6] The spiritual and mystical utopian tradition is often overlooked today as a genuine aesthetic basis for much networking activity. It is this spirit of utopianism which *Eternal Network* seeks to rekindle![7]

Eternal Network is an anthology of the networker artist whose essays often typify Robert Filliou's spiritual vision. In an urgent, contemporary context, they stand as archetypes for ecumenical art activism and for consciousness that provides an aesthetic basis for interconnection, collaboration, and communication in a local and global paradigm. This universal net-working and net-weaving among multi-ethnic artists is not unlike Filliou's Buddhism of universal weaving and cosmic interconnectedness—a holistic approach to understanding art, science and the universe, where all is inter-related and brought together like beads on a string. The process aesthetics of networking implies the action of dualistic forces: forward and reverse, turning within and without, creation and destruction, re-organization and recreation, of attachment and non-attachment, of taking and giving. Networker process aesthetics, the recurring theme throughout the anthology, are characterized by the weaving of informative ideas and concepts by individuals sharing in a collaborative spirit and vision.

We live in an information age and yet we often lack vision and the capacity to experience the mystery of nature and life. Has wisdom become a priority of few in the age of information? Many networking artists look within themselves to find the spiritual experience of creativity, not for the sake of art or a profession, but to return to art as an experiential process shared by all. Some critics are quick to condemn that introspective process as romantic, naive, or egocentric. There may be no other way to bring art back into the world than to recover our imagination and reverence for life; mail art networking does not separate art from life or life from art. The ethereal realm of the networker is linked to our daily lives. What is ethereal in networking aesthetics is a collective open dream. The substance of this dream is the imagination. The purpose of imagination is not to solve the mystery of life, but to embrace it.[8]

The evidence of networking process aesthetics can be found by those individuals who plunge into the mailstream. As visual poet and mail artist Marilyn R. Rosenberg writes, "Through interactive collaboration I have learned much about my thought processes, expanding the possibilities available in the merging of word and image. The integration of our minds and hands has provoked an explosion of concepts and expression."[9] Here, the aesthetic quality and experience of submersion is in the doing, in opening up to subjective and symbolic action. Within the networking mailstream and telematic community, artists grapple with formal qualities that define communication as conceptual arrangement, organization, design, form and style. But the objective pursuit of formal art production misses the larger, deeper interpretation of art as a living aesthetic; the value of experience, collaboration, and communion; the sharing of a global vision. Networking affirms the creative spirituality that is exchanged freely, openly and from the heart.

Challenge and risk abound when swimming in the mystic waters of the inclusive and communal network. This shouldn't be taken as some kind of communications fantasy. On the contrary, networker mystics are awakening others to the experience of what it is to be creative. As mail artists move beyond traditional mailing strategies to telecommunications

mail, some will bring with them aesthetic feeling that is grounded in process awareness. More than an emotion, aesthetic feeling is the intuitive truth of being and becoming.

Spiritualism in networking aesthetics is not a superstitious delusion or an arcane ritual. The *Eternal Network* describes the ethereal, open, and ephemeral nature of process aesthetics in networking. Each of the six sections in *Eternal Network* signifies and defines important aspects of networking process aesthetics: networker definitions, ethereal realms, open aesthetics, new directions, inter-connection of worlds, and communication issues. Process aesthetics are defined as a noistic[10] matrix of anti-hierarchical fabric woven by networkers. Networking includes a process aesthetic that is ethereal. Networking is an inclusive aesthetic open to all, without regard to race, color, religion, sex or nationality. Networking represents a process aesthetic that is new, perpetually new, exciting and filled with eros and the awe of life. Networking is a process aesthetic that is inter-connected and life-affirming. Networking is a process aesthetic of communication and communion. Networking stands for an aesthetic grounded in spirit; the spirit voices of individuals creating locally yet interacting globally. This is the holistic meaning of art that networks. Networking is not a manifesto, it is manifestation; a process, a spirit, a collective global vision![11]

The history of art criticism has established art products as golden calves, objects of desire and worship as primary aesthetic rationale for creativity. In mail and telecommunication art, however, process is an important product. Art and life are more than fashion, celebrity, control, competition or product consumption, and networkers recognize this in their search for process aesthetics. Are competition, self-interest, and hegemonic control desirable attributes, or do they lead to what English social philosopher Thomas Hobbes called a "war of all against all — in this race we must suppose to have no other garland than being foremost."?[12] We are sorely in need of a global paradigm-shift that honors cultural diversity while recognizing the need for human beings to nurture interdependent, creative collaboration.

Cultural exchange is a radical act. It can create paradigms for the reverential sharing and preservation of the earth's water, soil, forests, plants and animals. The ethereal networker aesthetic calls for guiding that dream through action. Cooperation and participation, and the celebration of art as a birthing of life, vision, and spirit are first steps. The artists who meet each other in the Eternal Network have taken these steps. Their shared enterprise is a contribution to our common future.

* * * * * *

1. Writers and researchers reading this anthology will find valuable resources in John Held's *A World Bibliography of Mail Art*, (1989) Dallas Public Library, and *Mail Art: An Annotated Bibliography*, (1991) Scarecrow Press Inc. Held's resources represent global networking collaborations to which hundreds of mail artists around the world generously contributed information. In such projects mail artists become vital elements in a network puzzle where each individual has his or her intimate glimpse of truth and knowledge to share.
2. Readers looking for a comprehensive historical documentation of mail art from 1960 to 1980 should consult Crane and Stofflet's *Correspondence Art*. *Eternal Network* introduces readers to the spirit within networking activities and acquaints readers with networking aesthetics and issues as described by active, contemporary participants in the global networking phenomenon.
3. Networking and networker: Usage of networking and networker throughout this anthology will vary according to the essayists' viewpoints. At the time *Eternal Network* was being prepared for publication, a growing segment of the mail art community (including the editor) participated in part among 250 Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congresses in twenty-five countries. The call for these networker congresses was first made in Hans Ruedi Fricker's essay, "Mail Art: A Process of Detachment," a text written for *Eternal Network* and then circulated into the international mail art network in 1991. The role of the networker as it was defined in the 1992 congresses was diverse, but in no way resembled the negative, exploitative and competitive business ethic that defines networking as a way for making profitable connections in a high-tech world. References to networker and networking allude to my publication *Networking Currents* (1986), or directly to Robert Filliou's designation of the "eternal network."
4. Michael Crane, "The Origins of Correspondence Art" in Michael

Crane and Mary Stofflet, eds., *Correspondence Art*, San Francisco: Contemporary Art Press, 1984, p. 98.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. I've always been attracted to the spirituality of networking among artists who see that force as a dynamic global structure in the development of networking aesthetics. For additional information read pp. 44–54 in my first book, *Networking Currents: Contemporary Mail Art Subjects and Issues,* Boston: Sandbar Willow Press, 1986.
8. In a letter from mail artist David Cole, written May 11, 1990, Cole discussed the subject of mysticism, networks and self: "We are all still cave painters trying to recollect mysteries. Only the mystery matters, and one cannot tell a mystery except as a story, except as something against which one appears. The problems of finding oneself against that background are sufficient unto themselves. I think that the future holds more spelunking."
9. Marilyn Rosenthal Rosenberg, "Bookworks," *Gallerie: Women's Art*, Winter, 1989, 11: 3, pp. 34–35.
10. Noism: A term created by Yugoslavian mail artist Andrej Tisma to describe his definition of networking. In his networking statement for the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress, 1992, Tisma explains the origin of noism: "Noism is a rubber stamp I carved on December 9, 1986 as a reaction to H.R. Fricker's well-known rubber stamp, 'After Dadaism, Fluxism, mailism comes tourism.'" A number of mail art networkers began using Tisma's term when Japanese mail artist Ryosuke Cohen began printing and distributing "nosim!" on thousands of colorful stickers. "Neonic" is a noist term and networker acronym influenced, in part, by Tisma and Cohen's extensive usage of noism.
11. The ethereal, open, and ephemeral nature of process aesthetics in networking is defined in the acronym n.e.o.n.i.c.s; *n*et-working, *e* (The Real), *o*pen, *n*ew, *i*nter-connectection, *c*ommunication, *s*pirit. This networking term was created in 1989 in a collaboration between Chuck Welch and visual poet Marilyn R. Rosenberg, Peekskill, NY.
12. M.M. Goldsmith, *Hobbes's Science of Politics*, New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1966, p. 56.

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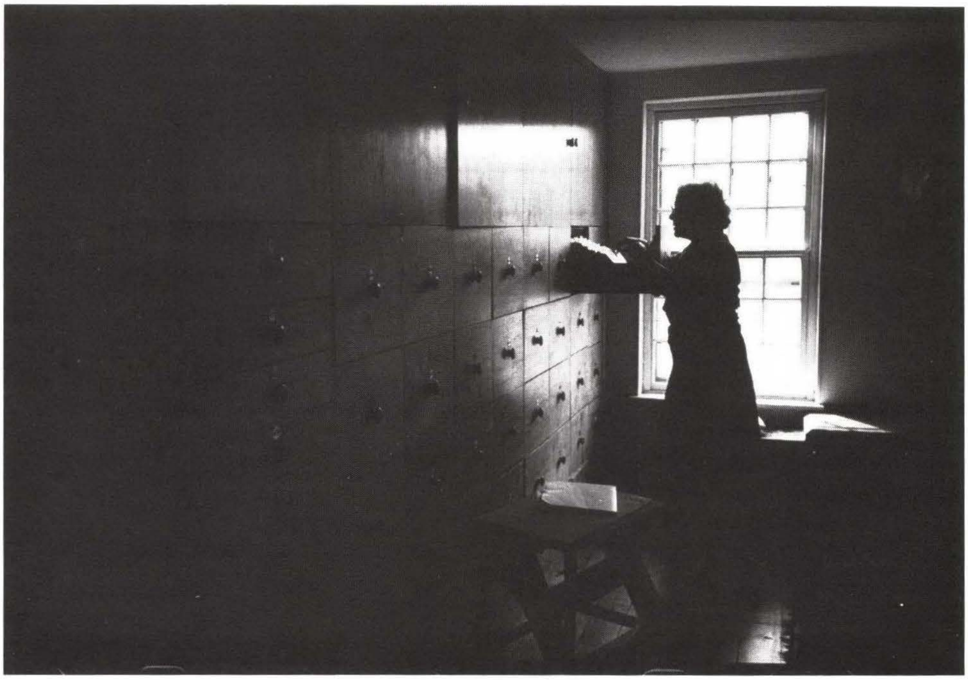


Figure 2. Jean Brown working in her archive at Shaker Seed House, Tyringham, MA., 1979. Photograph © Bill Hayward

Jean Brown: Friend of Mail Art

Chuck Welch

If envelopes are the flesh of mail art, then spirit would be content. And so, mail art never dies, it returns to sender. Jean Brown was one of mail art's best friends, a great patron and spirit. Her passing May 1, 1994 was grieved by mail artists around the world.

When I visited Jean Brown's son Robert in New York City in 1993, I mentioned that I needed a special photograph of his mother, preferably of Jean at home amongst her Shaker Seed House archive of Dada, Surrealist, Fluxus and Mail Art documents. The photograph was to appear in *Eternal Network* with a dedication. I told Robert I planned to personally hand-deliver the first copy of Eternal Network to Jean at her home in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts.

It was coincidental, but perhaps appropriate, that I heard of Jean's passing from the father of mail art, Ray Johnson. The following week a beautiful envelope from mail artist David Cole arrived with a May 4, 1994 New York Times obituary inside. It stated:

> *Mrs. Brown, whose maiden name was Levy, was born in 1911 in Brooklyn. Her father was a rare-book dealer who enjoyed taking his daughter to museums. She briefly attended Columbia University. In 1936, she married Leonard Brown, an insurance agent. They settled in Springfield, Mass., where Mrs. Brown worked as a librarian.*[1]

In a postcard dated May 5, 1992, Jean revealed, "My husband and I started collecting the archive in 1954. The inspiration was Robert Motherwell's *Dada Painters and Poets*.[2] We started immediately after its publication. The latter part of the archive, Fluxus, Mail Art, etc. seemed to inevitably and logically fall into the trajectory."[3]

Reviewing my personal collection of Jean's correspondence, I'm reminded of Jean's informative, humorous, engaging, and intimate correspondence art. And while I missed my opportunity to stand at Jean's door with the book I dedicated in her name, I realize that a gift of spirit never dies—it lives in the Eternal Network.

* * * * * *

1. Robert A. Smith, "Jean Brown, 82,an Art Collector Called the Den Mother of Fluxus," *The New York Times Obituaries*, May 4, 1994.
2. Jean Brown's collection of over 6,000 artists' books, manifestoes, Dadaist, Surrealist, Fluxus and Mail Art materials was purchased in 1983 by the J. Paul Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities in Santa Monica, California. In a letter to the author dated November 5, 1990 Jean Brown mentioned her continued efforts to support mail artists and friends of her archive, "I have tried hard to present other people and projects to the Getty especially my 'friends of the archives.' I sometimes succeed."
3. Jean Brown, in a letter to the author, May 5, 1992.

AN OPENING LETTER

Jean Brown

February 9, 1992

Mail Art—a mystical, magical art form. A few squiggles on paper placed in the mail box to arrive at the designated address.

The mail box becomes the gallery, the museum, and the address of the recipient.

One of my favorite pieces is by Ben Vautier. Ben has printed a postcard with two identical sides.
The sender fills each side with two different names and addresses.
The postman then has the choice of delivery.

Or a mail art project with millions of pieces destined for the U.N. or Amnesty International!
Boggling!

I prize every scrap I receive.

Love,

Jean

Networking
Internected, interconned, unconed
'thEternal' flattened so anyone can walk it,
'thEternal' doesn't mean skygodprayLoseparalysis-
yourmindbody doesn't mean
waitfor sacrificefor skimspiritfor or supraOneness,
'thEternal' is oneyou to oneyou
til oneyous listenspeaklisten with enough oneyous
they hear each oneyou there
acknowledge attend and empower youryou.
Youryou is art/istry (registry histry herstry)
Interdependent interface inter(pers)pretive.

Coco Gordon

PART 1 NETWORKING

Networking, mail art, and eternal network are central themes in this anthology. This section explores the origin and history of these terms in essays related to Fluxus, Ray Johnson's New York Correspondence School, the origin of one of mail art's first zines, *VILE*, Michael Bidner's creation of the artistamp genre, and Carlo Pittore's pivotal networking role in North American mail art during the 1980s.



Figure 3. George Maciunas, *Fluxmanifesto on Fluxamusement* (detail of Fluxshop graphic), 1965. Poster. Courtesy of Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. Gift of Jan and Ingeborg van der Marck; gift of Mrs. Billie Maciunas.

CHAPTER 1

THE EARLY DAYS OF MAIL ART

Ken Friedman

It is difficult to pinpoint the moment when artists' correspondence became correspondence art. By the end of the late 1950s, the three primary sources of correspondence art were taking shape. In North America, the New York Correspondence School was in its germinal stages in the work of artist Ray Johnson and his loose network of friends and colleagues. In Europe, the group known as the Nouveau Realistes were addressing radical new issues in contemporary art. On both continents, and in Japan, artists who were later to work together under the rubric of Fluxus were testing and beginning to stretch the definitions of art.

Correspondence art is an elusive art form, more variegated by nature than, say, painting. Where a painting always involves paint and a support surface, correspondence art can appear as any one of dozens of media transmitted through the mail. While the vast majority of correspondence art or mail art activities take place in the mail, today's new forms of electronic communication blur the edges of that forum. In the 1960s, when correspondence art first began to blossom, most artists found the postal service to be the most readily available—and least expensive—medium of exchange.

Today's micro-computers with modern facilities offer anyone computing and communicating power that two decades ago were available only to the largest institutions and corporations, and only a few decades before that weren't available to anyone at any price. Transistors and miniaturized electronics make it as simple today to record and to send a videotape as to write a letter. With teletext, interactive cable, mailgrams, electronic mail, electronic computer networking, video, inexpensive audio, and—looming on the horizon—myriad new communications techniques, correspondence art is harder to define than ever before.

While these facts establish a sense of perspective, the soul of correspondence art remains communication. Its twin faces are "correspondence art" and "mail art." Here the distinction is between reciprocal or interactive communication—correspondence—and unidirectional or one-way communication, mailed out without any requirement for response.

There are special cases of correspondence art that involve the mails as medium of transmission for purposes other than mail art. Good examples of this included exhibitions of art from Eastern Europe in which the cheapest and safest way of sending art to the United States was through the mail, though the art works sent were actually intended as—and only as—photographs, drawings, paintings, or artists' books.

Certain forms of art have become associated with correspondence art and mail art both by virtue of tradition and the ease with which they are mailed. These include postcards, artists' books, printed ephemera, rubber stamps, artists' postage stamps, and posters of various kinds.

The first phase of correspondence art primarily involved individual expression in reciprocal relationships, a natural outgrowth of artists' correspondence. History and tradition honor Ray Johnson as the central figure in this phase of correspondence art. To the degree that he identified, named and himself became identified with the emerging art form, this is true.

Working in the tradition of collage and the *objet trouvé* he was perhaps the first to identify the transaction of art

works and notes with colleagues as an art form itself. Through this stroke of inspiration, correspondence art was born. Johnson gave it focus by promulgating the rubric, "The New York Correspondence School of Art" (the name itself was coined by Ed Plunkett Fig. 4). Thus, by permutation, the world was given the new medium, correspondence art, and its first body of practitioners, The New York Correspondence School (NYCS).

However, correspondence art as such first grew from the work of the European artists identified as the "Nouveaux Realistes," a name coined by French critic Pierre Restany. The core issue of the "New Realism," a movement born in the early 1950s, was the conception of an art made of real elements, that is, materials taken from the world directly rather than pictorially. The group includes Arman, Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, Martial Raysse, Raymond Hains, Daniel Spoerri and Francois Dufrene, and—in some senses—Christo. These artists each used a direct slice of life. The actual sectioning went from the highly tenuous or theoretical projects of Manzoni and Klein to the embedded and snared works of Arman and Spoerri, the decollages of Hains and Dufrene and the world-embracing, massively realized projects of Christo.

Issues and ideas that motivated the Nouveaux Realistes also emerged in the Pop Art of the late 1950s and early 1960s in Britain and the United States, though Pop Art tended to be an art which took the real into its scope emblematically rather than by direct incorporation or manipulation.

Collage sensibility and incorporation of reality are attitudes shared with much later correspondence art. It is in the use of the postal system, of artists' stamps and of the rubber stamp that Nouveaux Realisme made the first gestures toward correspondence art and toward mail art.

Several early key works in these media were created by these artists. Klein's famous "Blue Stamp" was a postal *cause célèbre* and a bureaucratic scandal after it was successfully mailed and postmarked in the mid 1950s. Arman introduced the rubber stamp into contemporary art with his cachets and accumulations of the early and middle years of the decade. Kurt Schwitters had done stamp works as early as 1918. The Russian Futurists had created the first modern art with rubber stamps a few years earlier. Marcel Duchamp had experimented with a piece in the form of a post card, and the Italian Futurists showed interest in using the mails. Even so, the latter were perhaps examples of mailed art rather than mail art and even the use of rubber stamps as an art medium vanished until shortly after the end of the Second World War, when Arman resurrected it in his *œuvre*. Spoerri not only created ephemeral mailed works and projects, small gazettes and cards, but his involvement with mail art—unlike that of Klein or Arman—continued unabated for over a decade and a half spanning the first three phases of correspondence art.

Thus, it can probably be said that the Nouveaux Realistes were the first artists to use correspondence media as art forms in their own right. However, it was Ray Johnson and his circle of friends in the New York Correspondence School who gave the first phase its characteristic sensibility and presence.

If the Nouveaux Realistes created paradigms of correspondence art and mailed art as works, it was the New York Correspondence School that took the notion from paradigm to practice. Ranging at times from seventy-five to as many as three hundred people, the NYCS was summoned into being by Ray Johnson but, at its height, existed around him as many intersecting relationships independent of his direct involvements. Many distinguished artists participated in Johnson's whirling vortex of mailings and events, some of whom, such as Richard C., Ed Plunkett, or Dick Higgins and the Fluxus artists became themselves major shapers of the ethos and attitudes of correspondence art.

The NYCS relied on direct interaction between correspondents. As a result, the works that one might receive



Figure 4. E.M. Plunkett, *Surrealist Digest*, U.S.A., 1985. Rubber Stamped Collage.

in the early days were highly personal, often highly crafted. Handmade collages, carefully printed photographs, even framed paintings were fairly common. Odd and lavish objects were not uncommon. Some artists took pride and even a perverse pleasure in sending one another the most outlandish and possibly unmailable objects or series of projects they could conceive. My favorite project was a series of chairs, smaller chairs mailed whole, larger chairs mailed disassembled to fit within postal size limits. The challenge was to mail them unwrapped and visible, persuading postal clerks to accept the items as falling within regulations. This was, of course, a time when postal regulations were far different and substantially more lax than today.

In the 1960s, Ray Johnson set the tone for NYCS. *The Paper Snake*, a book on his work, published by Something Else Press, is a good example of the abundance and flavor of the time. Direct and personal interaction were the salient qualities and greatest pleasures of the NYCS and the era of the 1960s. The first phase of correspondence art was also characterized by a trenchant sense of privacy. These were private letters and activities, exchanges among friends. An attitude that only members need apply prevailed. University of Maine Art Historian Owen Smith suggests that the private, inward-looking attitude that Johnson adopted with his New York Correspondence School was a specific reaction against the exclusionary facade of art history and the exclusive attitudes of Clement Greenberg and his Tenth Street School. This makes sense, but it applies more to other members of the NYCS than to its central figure, Ray Johnson, whose hermetic practices are as much an expression of his personality as a conscious social statement. The transformative social potential and open spiritual quality of the Eternal Network never seemed to interest Ray. He was, and is, an atelier master in the old sense, even though he expresses himself through collage techniques that reach out into the world.

Many of Johnson's best-known works are the numerous lovely, dense printed collages in which he specifically used the names of "members" of the NYCS, occasionally adding or dropping names. These seemed to point inward to a closed circle. This is not to say that it was bad: it's simply the way it was. In the first phase of correspondence art, the paradigm blossomed, flourished and found most of its major practitioners. In the second phase, correspondence art turned outward to the world.

It is at this point, during the first phase of the development of correspondence art—but looking toward the second—that it is best to explore the role of Fluxus in the development and dissemination of mail art.

Fluxus germinated in the artistic ferment of the late 1960s. Some of the Fluxus people found each other in John Cage's and Richard Maxfield's classes at The New School. Others met

through George Maciunas' publications, or committees, or the early festivals, and in the moving feasts of the era, such as the ongoing series of events at Yoko Ono's loft on Chambers Street. By 1962, Fluxus was formed and named. A few individuals from Europe and America, such as the Czech artist Milan Knizak, the German Joseph Beuys, Geoff Hendricks or I, came into the group slightly late. Members of the initial cast of characters came and went through about 1966.

Fluxus has always been an unlikely movement: sprightly, hard to pin down, Zen-like in its reluctance to be described, it is hardly a movement at all. One may rather call it a rubric, a forum, an elusive philosophy made real by the fact that real artists engaged one another and the world in real acts under the name Fluxus. The edges of Fluxus have never been particularly crisp or brutal. So it is that Fluxus shares Daniel Spoerri with the Nouveaux Realistes; Christo has occasionally floated into Fluxus, though he has about him always a sense that he can never be part of any particular group with which he may share interests. Half a dozen of the most active and charming participants in the NYCS were very active in Fluxus. At times, even Ray Johnson took part in various Fluxus publications and events.

As elusive and unlikely to proselytize as Fluxus seemed, it also had a very public side. Massive festivals, grand publishing programs, (Fig. 3) extensive tours of performances and concerts, proposals for social reform and public housing came out of a movement that was as much characterized by these prophetic, eve socio-political leanings as by such typically evanescent projects typified by George Brechts' laconic events or Alison Knowles' performances.

At first, the Fluxus artists active in the correspondence art world (including many who did not participate in the NYCS) were quite content to create private works. This is a paradox, because the works were implicitly public. They were printed. They used the mail for distribution. They invited the world to

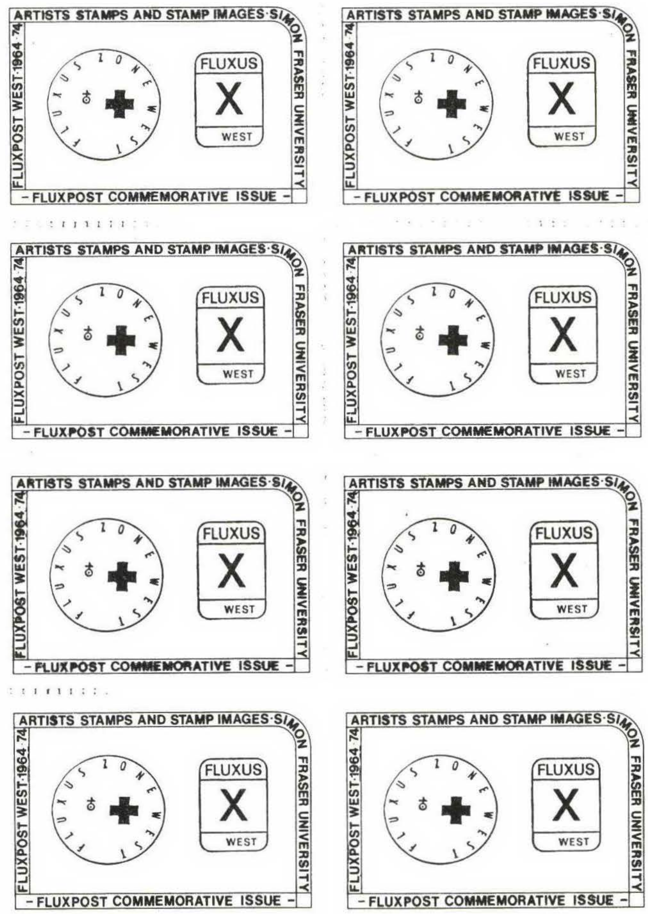


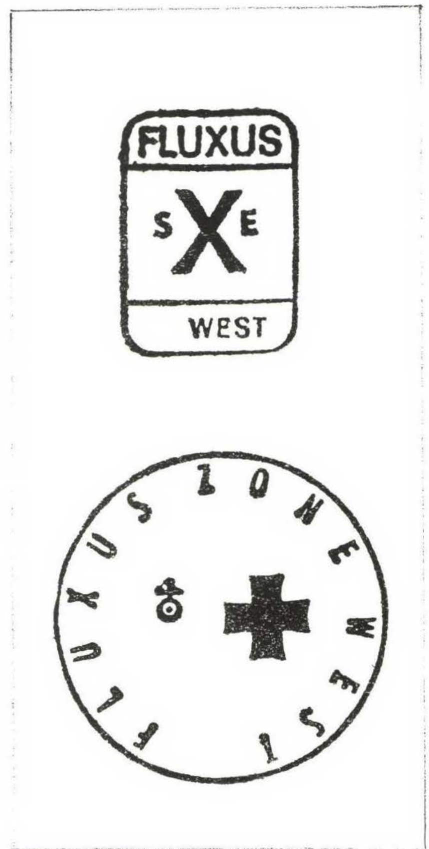
Figure 5. Ken Friedman, *Fluxpost Commemorative Issue*, U.S.A., 1974. Friedman's stamp of two rubber stamp images includes his *Fluxus West* emblem designed by Wolfgang Feelisch, and *Fluxus Zone West* by Joseph Beuys.

take part. At the same time, however, they went only to a small circle of artists, composers and designers who already knew each other. Some of them were openly skeptical about the value of being too public and outgoing in what they did. This, too, is a paradox, since to be an artist is, by definition, to be a public person, but many Fluxus artists have always wavered between the public character of making art and the private quality of their approach to art and life. It may even be because they see art and life as intertwined that the art has a distinctly private side, as life does.

Still, Fluxus had a public edge and an absolutely public intention, and correspondence art took its place in Fluxus practice along with festivals, projects, films, concerts and all the rest. These included mail art pieces by individuals, and



Figure 6. George Maciunas, *Fluxpost*, U.S.A., 1974. Artists' Stamp. Courtesy of Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. Gift of Dr. Abraham M. Friedman.



(Figure 7). Above, Ken Friedman, *Fluxus West Southeast*, U.S.A., 1975. Rubber stamp. Below, Joseph Beuys, Germany, *Fluxus ZoneWest.* Rubber stamp. Variations and copies of the Friedman–Beuys Fluxus rubber stamps have been assimilated and distributed throughout the international mail art network. A recent variation entitled *Fluxus Pacific Rim* emerged from San Francisco in 1994.

marvelous series of publications, post cards, stamps (Fig. 5) and stationery published by George Maciunas for Fluxus artists including Bob Watts, Robert Filliou, Ben Vautier, Daniel Spoerri, and others among us. There was even a Fluxus Postal Kit prepared in 1966 complete with a Fluxpost cancellation mark, permitting an entire, Fluxus-controlled postal exchange to take place (Fig. 7).

By the late 1960s, the public opportunities of correspondence art and mail art became manifestly visible. It was then that the prophetic side of Fluxus emerged, establishing the second phase of mail art. Now, for the first time, the correspondence art—in the previous sense that the term has been used here—that reached out to the public, embodied not only correspondence art, but a larger, and admittedly less private, mail art. Through this outreach, the extraordinary latent power for international communication became overt, termed "The Eternal Network" by Robert Filliou. It was at this time that mail art first created, and began to make real, its potential for social change and for contributing new forms of communication to the world.

Fluxus was a forum for experimentation. The commitment to experimentation and to research was profound. It was characteristic that Fluxus participants not only asked "Why?" but "How?" — and then they would generally go on to ask "Why not?" and "How else?" A fair number of Fluxus members came to art from untraditional backgrounds—Spoerri from ballet, Higgins from music and printing, Paik from music and robotics, Filliou from economics, Brecht from natural and biological sciences, and so on. Others, such as Alison Knowles or Wolf Vostell were trained as artists, yet they developed a highly experimental notion of what art could be. Finally, the ringmaster of the Fluxus circus, George Maciunas, was both pragmatic and experimental. As the chief editor and frequent organizer of Fluxus activities, his paradoxical whims, highly refined organizational sensibility and peculiar administrative quirks gave Fluxus its unique flavor and offered Fluxus artists the wide range of philosophical permissions and encouragements that came to characterize the Fluxus ethos.

Fluxus was the first group of artists to understand the potential of the postal system as a world-spanning, cost-effective distribution system. It was open. It went everywhere. The direct operating cost to the artist was low. If the potential was visible, however, Fluxus did not fill it at first. The implicit public quality of the postal system and its use by Fluxus means that early Fluxus activities were more public in theory than they were in practice. The reason for this is the ability to reach out to almost anyone, anywhere through the mail. This can be as much a guarantee of privacy as publicity. Because of this, many early Fluxus exchanges using the mail were rather like telephone calls for objects. They used a public network, but they were not broadcast. The largest use of the mails at that time involved a kind of narrowcasting, with the mailing of George Maciunas's policy letters and the Mail Order Fluxshops.

Public engagement requires more than establishing potentially public media. It requires reaching out and finding effective ways to open a public dialogue. In the early 1960s, Fluxus was years away from its eventual public impact. Even though publicity was implicit in many Fluxus projects and activities, the activities were not yet fully public. Nam June Paik's ambitious program for renewing television was a perfect example. He was already doing television work in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but he was doing it conceptually, in the laboratory of the Fluxus community and exchanging his ideas in the invisible academy. He reached out with manifestoes and through his landmark correspondence project, *The University of Avant-Garde Hinduism*. Even so, the *University* was more private than public.

The *University* and Paik's mailed pieces implied an eventual public medium, however, and Paik had always shown a genius for publicity. The *University* became an opening salvo in his long-term plan. Using the mail, he perfected a tactic that today would be termed an opinion leader strategy. He used it to establish the network of personal contacts that he would later use to bring his video projects to life. It was a private, narrowcast network. The first public network that gave Fluxus a broadcast voice came with the creation of Something Else Press, and especially the *Something Else Newsletter*.

At first Fluxus artists took part in correspondence art as private individuals. Some were involved in Nouveau Realisme, some in the New York Correspondence School, some as individual participants on the growing network. By the end of the 1960s, a number of Fluxus people had begun to view mail art as a medium offering unique potentials and challenges. We saw beyond the basic issue of art through the mail, and began to explore the reaches and media of correspondence and mail themselves.

The first major step was taken by Dick Higgins when he established Something Else Press and the *Something Else Press Newsletter*. The Press was an innovative publishing house designed to bring experimental and avant garde work to

the public eye in well-designed, handsome, durable books. It is now acknowledged and admired as one of the early sources of much contemporary art. Higgins himself is famed as the essayist who brought the term "intermedia" into current usage. When Higgins wrote his seminal essay on intermedia in 1968, he sought a format to make it widely known. The form he chose was that of the newsletter.

In his newsletter, he created an inexpensive medium for sharing art and art ideas with thousands of readers. It was through his ever-expanding list of readers, book buyers, recipients of the newsletter and the Press' catalogues that Higgins first redefined the mail art network. This is a significant moment in mail art, even though Higgins did not view the newsletter as a mail art project. For the first time, a correspondence artist consciously used the mails as a regular medium of public communication. Though the newsletter was outbound in its form it had a tone that encouraged response and participation, a fact that Higgins and the voluminous files and archives of his Press demonstrate. Higgins respondents and correspondents moved into the network and into the art world. Staid artists became experimental, and experimental artists came into contact with other experimental artists. Something Else Press, founded as an outgrowth of Fluxus, was small but it was decidely public in conception. It became the locus of a vast, resonating network of correspondents. Something Else Press became a central node in the development of experimental art in America, the entire rage of intermedia, new music, concrete poetry and Fluxus work that Dick Higgins termed "the arts of the new mentality." It is vital to note the development of a network intended as a forum through which ideas might be exchanged and through which like minds might come into communication. This was a public realization of the idea inchoate in the New York Correspondence School, never fully realized due to the highly private, personal context that characterized the NYCS. Further, it was through the Something Else Press that the projects of artists such as Robert Filliou, George Brecht, Daniel Spoerri and even Ray Johnson himself first found a broad public.

The next Fluxus contribution to correspondence art and to mail art was the exploration and use of the medium of mail as a communication system. These projects came in three parts. The first had to do with communication, the second with exhibition and the third with publishing.

When Fluxus began, the art world was a much smaller place and experimental artists comprised a far less significant proportion of the art world than today. It was difficult to find out who was who or to reach others who might share given interests. In the early days of Fluxus, George Maciunas regularly published the Fluxus mailing lists and membership lists. This permitted ready access to people about whom one might wish to know more. It also suggested to some of us the notion of contacting those whom one didn't know; to find out who they were, what they were doing, and what made them interesting enough to incorporate the Fluxus list.

Starting in 1966 at Fluxus West, I began to publish annual compilations of the Fluxus lists, adding to those lists interesting artists whom we were able to locate and identify. By 1972, the lists had grown to a point where we published over 1400 names and addresses, together, where possible, with phone numbers. The 1972 list was published in cooperation with Canada's Image Bank. It was released in hundreds of copies, distributed gratis to artists, arts organizations and publishers around the world. The list became the core of the first *FILE Magazine* artists' directory, was used to develop Flash Art's *Art Diary*, and, in expanded and better researched versions, served such staid reference tomes as *Who's Who in American Art* and *Who's Who in America*. The project was an act of social responsibility; access to a fuller universe of information in a professional environment marked by restricted communication. The restriction of communication

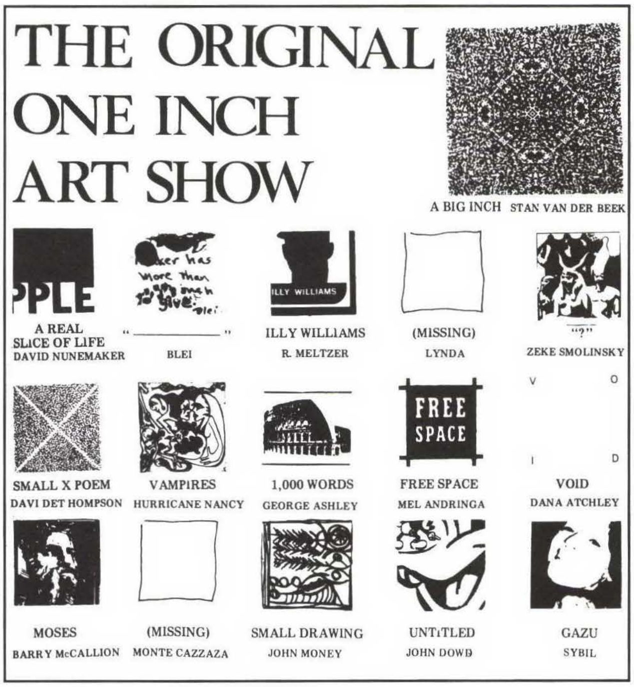


Figure 8. Terry Reid, *The Original One Inch Art Show*, New Zealand, 1973–74. This detail from Terry Reid and Robert Kerr's *Inch Art Issue* documents some mail artist examples from the *Inch Art Project.* Courtesy Hood Museum of Art, Fluxus Collection, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. Gift of Dr. Abraham M. Friedman.

is a tool and a weapon. It gives power to those who possess the media of communication and it works against those who lack rich access. It seemed to us that certain individuals at the center of art world media—critics, curators, dealers—could reach anyone, while the rest of us had a hard time finding jealously guarded mailing lists to reach others. The wide publication of the lists, right or wrong, changed all that. The reference tools and media that grew from our lists had an impact on the art world that was not forseen when, in order to gain greater control over our own communication, Fluxus West began the annual directory and publications.

The existence of such substantial numbers of people, many —if not most—interested in communicating with one another and experimentally inclined (at least from time to time), suggested new ways of exhibiting art and of preparing exhibitions. The first such notions were rudimentary. It was tough to bring large works of art out of Eastern Europe in crates, but a big drawing or a suite of photos could easily be put in an envelope to be mailed out as a letter, albeit a thick letter. So it was that at first, even as we were using the mail to create experimental works as individual artists, we were also using the mail to transmit fairly ordinary or traditional art works for exhibitions.

Many of the exhibitions presented at Fluxus West were shipped through the mail-not mail art, but mailed art that was then installed as any art might be. Exhibitions of work by many artists came in the mail: Milan Knizak, Ben Vautier, Christo, George Brecht, and group shows like Young Hungarian Artists, Young Swiss Artists, A Small Show and the original Inch Art project that Terry Reid later carried further in Australia (Fig. 8).

At the start of the 1970s, a number of exhibitions blossomed simultaneously that were to transform correspondence art and mail art from private activity to public access. The first projects were the major mail art shows organized by Marcia Tucker at the Whitney Museum, to which Ray Johnson's personal friends and New York Correspondence School colleagues were invited, and the 1971 Biennal of Paris, curated by French art historian and critic Jean-Marc Poinsot, involving the several dozen figures who were at that time seen as the leading artists in the field.

At first, the mails were used to create exhibitions or used as a forum for private artists whose interactions were exhibited. The leap to a public process seems to have emerged from an idea that I had after my experience with the lists. I reasoned that the lists themselves might be used as the body of artists invited to exhibit. The notion went through stages. When George Neubert, then curator of the Oakland Museum, offered me a one-man exhibition for 1972, I chose a one-year project inviting people to correspond with me through the museum. This invitation started with the use of the lists and grew to become public. A second project was mounted at the University of Washington museum, The Henry Art Gallery, in Seattle. At

the Henry Gallery, we addressed the public directly to create enormous regional group participants, incidentally involving participants from afar through extended media and wide public coverage. The final apotheosis was a project entitled Omaha Flow Systems, mounted at the Joslyn Art Museum in the Spring of 1973.

For Omaha Flow Systems, we devised a number of projects and sub-projects, using all of the administrative and analytic tools available to us. The show, while serving to model a wide variety of ideas and projects, became best known as the largest mail art project to date—or since. Thousands of invitations were mailed, and mass media, local, regional, national and international, were used.

Over 20,000 items were received at the Joslyn, with many tens of thousands of additional viewer contacts, input/output transactions, systems that we could not trace, satellite exhibitions at other institutions across the region and around the world. The recent histories of mail art show that Omaha Flow Systems became the basic model for all mail art exhibitions since 1973, and—in its sub-projects—as the model for several uses of mail art and correspondence art in both exhibition and other forms. In many cases, mail art projects modeled on the paradigm developed in Omaha did not come from Omaha directly. Rather, the model was adapted, say, by an artist from South Dakota who invited a friend from Iowa to participate. The Iowan created a mail art show that was an inspiration to some artists from Staten Island. The Staten Island show influenced some people in Connecticut, and so on. Further, several shows developed at the same time as Omaha Flow Systems, also using our lists and research, had enormous direct influence. These included, most notably, Davi Det Hompson's *Cyclopedia*, and the several exhibitions organized by Terry Reid and by the Canadian mail art geniuses at Image Bank. The idea began to take on its own life as a *medium* or an *intermedium*, rather than as the project or work of one artist.

The publishing paradigms developed through Fluxus have had substantial impact on mail art. At first, the notion of newsletters and periodicals was treated playfully, as, for example, Nam June Paik's *Review of the University of Avant Garde Hinduism*, or Daniel Spoerri's magazine from the Greek island of Simi. Dick Higgins, as already discussed, took a further step with the *Something Else Press Newsletter*. George Brecht created the V-*TRE* newspaper George Maciunas carried it forward, allied conceptually and physically to the production of Fluxus multiples and concerts. (Fig. 9) Where the Fluxus publishing ethos came directly into the realm of contemporary mail art was in *Amazing Facts Magazine* and the birth of *New York Correspondence School Weekly Breeder*.

Amazing Facts Magazine was a crudely assembled publication created at Fluxus West in 1968. We gathered our mail, put it into a folio with a cover, and sent it out. The idea lasted one issue, but established a notion of gathering as the editorial principle for a magazine. Independently in Germany, Thomas Niggl was creating *Omnibus News*, the first truly gathered or accumulated magazine in multiple editions. These two preceeded the better known Ace Space Company anthologies gathered and published by Dana Atchley, and, finally, the *Assembling* anthologies (See Chapter 27) developed by Henry Korn, Richard Kostelanetz and Mike Metz, today the best known and most widely disseminated of such periodicals.

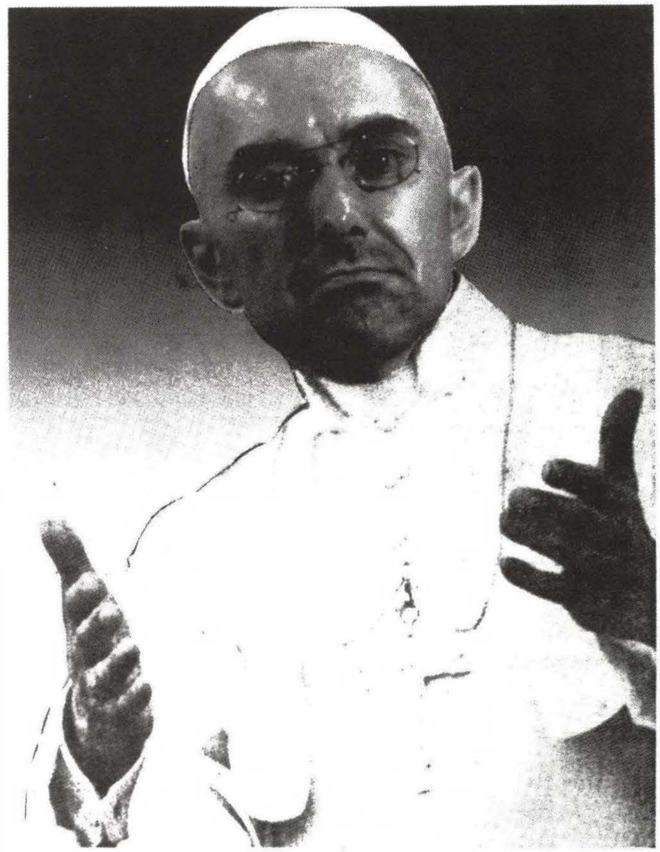
More quirky and playful, the *New York Correspondence School Weekly Breeder* (Fig. 10) was both a joke and a way to establish regular, weekly contact with other artists. The *NYCSWB* was published through about ten or

a V TRE EXTRA

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Hart attack kills him at summer palace

MACIUNAS DIES



George Maciunas in one of his many disguises to elude the Attorney General.

Flux Pope George Maciunas died last year after collapsing with a heart attack at his summer palace in New Marlborough. Earlier doctors fought to save the 92 years old spinster after being beaten and gang raped. He was given the last rites and the Flux Council appealed for world-wide prayers for his life.

'With deep anguish' Sobbing aide breaks news to the world

"She suffered horribly," said a Scotland Yard man. "The people who did this were animals."

A sobbing spokesman announced the news "with profound anguish and emotion." Crowds wept in the main square outside the palace.

Bruises

Three youths were involved— Afterwards one of them went to sleep on the battered spinster's bed. The parish church bell tolled a death knell. The papal Flux guards, dressed in their evening uniform of dark blue, closed the heavy gates of the palace.

The Pope was administered a Holy Flux Oil, a rite known as "extreme unction."

The old lady was raped three times. Her jaw and six ribs were broken. Her body was a mass of bruises - battered with her own aluminum tea kettle. At the time the trail leader of 700 million pranksters was listening to jokes recited at his bedside by his private secretary.

Tragedy

"This was the most horrific attack on a woman I have ever experienced and one I hope I'll never experience again," added Detective Inspector Robert Hayday, who is leading the investigation.

The Pope's two personal physicians, the Fluxus Secretary of State, George Brecht, and several others were at the Pope's bedside when he died. Yesterday the spinster underwent two emergency operations in Bart's Hospital, London. Only six days ago the Pope visited a cardinal's tomb and told a congregation, "I hope to meet him after death, which cannot be far away."

The attack was on Saturday night. A police spokesman said: "He made full use of his jet age papacy and in his 15 years of office has travelled further and wider than any of his predecessors." "An apostle on the move," he was the first reigning pontiff to travel by air, the first to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the first to receive Communist leaders. He survived a knife attack in the Philippines in 1978. Two youths shinnied up a drainpipe into the neighboring flat of a 34 year old man who was out playing bingo. They ransacked the man's flat. They disturbed the old lady who came up to investigate. They beat her up and then they all raped her.

Blood

One of the most difficult moments was in 1971 when he issued his encyclical letter on so called "Avant Garde" Festivals, which upheld the ban on verbal communication. When the neighbor came home, he found this youth asleep on the bed and the woman in a pool of blood on the floor.

Fluxus officials were said to be inspecting the grottos of St. Peter's Basilica, where Popes are buried, and the sewers of Rome. It was during this that he was stricken by the fatal attack. Last night a youth was helping police inquiries.

Strollers along the waterfront of Buenos Aires are often surprised to see the crews of Japanese merchant ships playing stickball or catch, which the soccer-loving Argentine longshoremen consider "quaint Oriental games."

The Eskimos have been forbidden by Danish authorities to hunt within several square miles of the crash site. The Eskimos have also been told not to boil their meat with melted sea ice, as they have done for centuries in order to obtain salt, but to buy salt at the Danish Government trading post and to use melted glacier ice from the island for water instead.

450 SPERRY WORKERS FACE THE AX

A funeral atmosphere gripped the Sperry Gyroscope plant at Lake Success, L.I., today as its 6,350 employees reported for work.

Figure 9. Cover of *A V TRE EXTRA* (Fluxus Newspaper No. 11, 1979). Offset on paper. Fluxus Collection, Courtesy of Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. Gift of Dr. Abraham M. Friedman.

eleven issues at Fluxus West, then passed to Stu Horn, a Philadelphia artist. Horn, already well known as The Northwest Mounted Valise, a longtime friend of Ray Johnson and a talented graphic poet, produced a number of issues for the second volume and then passed the periodical to Bill Gaglione and Tim Mancusi in San Francisco. Gaglione and Mancusi took the idea on, and through their network of friends and correspondents, transformed the *NYCSWB* into an odd—and oddly influential—periodical. Starting with its modest, single-sheet beginnings in 1971, the *NYCSWB* grew to spark the phenomenon in publishing known as the "Dadazine," a format adopted by mail artists that spread farther to influence artists books and publishing in fields as diverse as punk rock and art criticism.

I feel that mail art has four eras. The first is the private era. The private era lasted from the early 1950s through the mid–1960s. It is characterized by the sorts of exchanges I discuss in this article, and some exchanges characteristic of that era continue even today.

The second era began when Fluxus sought to make mail art public. It began with the *Something Else Newsletter* and it really took off with my projects and experiments aimed specifically at a radical interactive broadcast use of the mails. The biggest projects were the *One Year One Man Show*, *Work in Progress*, and *Omaha Flow Systems.* These projects concluded the experiments of the second era and became the foundation of the third era.

The explosion of the third era began with the *One Year One Man Show*, Work in Progress, and *Omaha Flow Systems.* It was also due in great part to Tom Albright's major coverage of mail art. The role he played in putting mail art before the widest possible public was incalculable. My three shows had vast international outreach on the art network and a broad public audience in the regions where the shows took place. Albright's reviews of the *One Year One Man Show* in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and Art *Gallery Magazine* were still located in the art world. His ten-section, two-part series in *Rolling Stone* was a major public signal. These coincided with several other projects of the same time: Davi det Hompson's *Cyclopedia* (1973); the birth of *FILE Magazine* (1972); the publication of the first *Image Bank Image Directories* (1971–1972); the largest publication and widest circulation to that time of the *Fluxus West International Directory of the Arts*, done in cooperating with *Image Bank* (1973); the birth of 'zines with the *New York Correspondence School Weekly Breeder* (1971). All these took place during the same two or three year period.

I feel that I came into mail art at the end of the private phase. When I came in, Johnson was still corresponding with only a handful of people. These were almost all linked to one another through being introduced to each other by Johnson himself. The Fluxus network was then still small. You can see the exact size by examining George Maciunas' membership lists. Publicity was implicit, but only Dick Higgins had studied out how to make this work public before I came on the scene. He was the only one who had undertaken a workable program of public engagement, devoting the necessary discipline and resources to the task.

Some of us who had been active in the first two eras of mail art were irritated, even angered by the explosion of junk mail and self-serving egotism in the third. I for one, failed to recognize the fact that growth produces growing pains, that new artists need to explore, even to be stupid as they try their hand. The time was marked by hundreds of projects and exhibitions termed "first" and "first international," as artists unaware of history and community each tried to become the leading figure in the network. At the same time, their striving was genuine. The debates had already begun that were to provide a platform for a renewed sense of community.


Are You a Good Judge of People?

(Scoring for questions in test on page 6)

1. (A — 10 points, B — 5 points, C — 0 points.) Persons who were aware of the signs of a difficult person selected A as probably being the least difficult type because of the protective quality that appears to be lacking in the figures that are portrayed in drawings B and C.

2. Yes — 10, No — 0; 3. Yes — 10, No — 0; 4. Yes — 10, No — 0; 5. Yes — 10, No — 0; 6. Yes — 10, No — 0; 7. Yes — 10, No — 0; 8. Yes — 10, No — 0; 9. Yes — 10, No — 0; 10. Yes — 10, No — 0; 11. Yes — 10, No — 0; 12. Yes — 10, No — 0.

YOUR SCORE____

0-45: Those people in this bracket avoid many scars because they can evaluate people with relative accuracy. They are fine parents, excellent teachers, top-notch counselors.

50-85: This is an average score. Most of us are outgoing and fail to recognize the characteristics of difficult people, or, if we do, we try to help them. People in this bracket may sometimes be disappointed but on the whole they are satisfied with their appraisal of friends.

90-120: Those who rate this score are often disappointed with others because of their inability to foresee problems. By failing to spot the difficult people they are making their own lives more troublesome. Reviewing this test and the answers will help them to evaluate people more accurately.

finish it

MODERN MUSIC DEPT.
THIS WEEK: MORE ERIC A.

ARTIST'S PROOF

Rabbit
SMOKES
+++

TEST YOURSELF Are You a Good Judge of People?

The ability to judge people correctly is a talent which avoids many problems, disappointments and anxieties. Too, if one can evaluate carefully, he or she can be of great help to those who need it. This test, by Jane Sherrod Singer, M.A., Psychology and Education, poses some interesting questions. For scoring and analysis please turn to page 29.

To take this test have one person in mind — a business associate, a family member, a friend or an acquaintance.

1. Which of the three drawings below do you think best describes the person you are thinking about, A, B or C?
2. Does this person often imply or state that the other sex has the best of everything? Yes____ No____
3. Does he/she often make envious remarks about others? Yes____ No____
4. Does this man or woman like to expose secrets they know about others? Yes____ No____
5. After talking with this person do you wish you had left certain things unsaid? Yes____ No____
6. Does he/she often find fault with their life? Yes____ No____
7. Does the individual you have in mind often predict an unhappy ending for any proposal? Yes____ No____
8. Does he or she want everything to go according to his/her rules? Yes____ No____
9. When with this person do you keep your opinions to yourself? Yes____ No____
10. Is the conversation of the person you have in mind filled with horror stories such as murders, accidents or illnesses? Yes____ No____
11. Do you usually leave this person with the feeling that living is no fun? Yes____ No____
12. Are you often disappointed in your evaluations of others and/or many times feel others do not recognize your merits? Yes____ No____

A B C

Happy 37th Birthday, Donald Duck!

SPECIAL MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE
GUEST BREEDER: GEORGE MACIUNAS

NYCS WEEKLY BREEDER VOL ONE #7 EDITOR:

Figure 10. Ken Friedman, *New York Correspondence School Weekly Breeder* (Vol. 1, No. 7, 1971). U.S.A. Fluxus Collection Courtesy of Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. Gift of Dr. Abraham M. Friedman.

Disillusioned, I left the network in the mid 1970s. Ten years later, when the network reached out to me again, I saw that a shift had taken place. The network had become a community, characterized by genuine leaders each speaking for different visions and ideas. Artists such as Carlo Pittore, J.P. Jacob, Leavenworth Jackson, Chuck Welch, Vittore Baroni, Ullises Carrion, Anna Banana, Shozo Shimamoto, Dobrica Kamperelic and H.R. Fricker were not simply making work, but engaging in major discussions and debates—by mail and in person. The network had produced historian-artists such as Michael Crane, John Held, Judith Hoffberg and Clemente Padin. This was the fourth era, an era characterized by moral intensity I hadn't seen since the 1960s, by passion, by commitment and by a real interest in the network, a network seen as a human phenomenon more important than art. In this fourth phase, early adulthood, mail art had become a complete art form, practiced by tens of thousands around the world, by history, discourse, and community as any art form is.

It was also a time of blurred boundaries. Carlo Pittore, an American, had an Italian name, aspirations toward a new renaissance of painting, and a position of global leadership as a spokesman for the network. Judith Hoffberg, already a distinguished fine arts librarian and scholar, had emerged as an artist-publisher-archivist. Chuck Welch, J.P. Jacob, and Vittore Baroni had become artist-philosophers.

Even as the art world continued to ignore these artists, they were creating an art world of their own, and creating a world of communication that extended once again far beyond the boundaries of art. When I had last seen the mail art network, it was primarily locked inside the art world, despite our best intentions. It was essentially focused in the centers of the art world in Europe and North America. When I returned, I found an evolutionary growth that brought mail art from a tentative beginning in Latin America to full flower, increased activity in Asia, the birth of activity in Africa and in the Middle East. I also found evidence of the same touchiness, pettiness and egotism that had characterized the 1970s.

Members of the mail art network, in striving to establish a philosophical basis, had sometimes established petty hierarchies complete with rules and orthodox standards of behavior. Women had difficulties with the network and with its behavior, summed neatly with rubber stamp artist Freya Zabitsky's mail art slogan, "Men make manifestoes, women make friends." (Fig. 11) Members of the network wanted to be accepted by the art world at the same time as they rejected its rules, leading to the many complications that any love-hate relationship creates. It was a transitional era, exciting and flawed as any time of transition must be. It was marked by earnest striving and by the huge lapses that attend every endeavor that is earnest. Today, in 1992, correspondence art, mail art and the network seem to be in the fourth phase, though I sense hints of a new current emerging. That discussion is not history, but prediction, and it doesn't belong here.

From the beginning, several trends have been clear in correspondence art and mail art. One has been the inherent opposition between private correspondence and public dialogue. Another has been the way in which the network has used the tension between these two polarities to give birth to new ways of approaching art.



Figure 11. Freya Zabitsky, *Men Make Manifestos*, U.S.A., 1987(?). Handcarved Rubber Stamp.

There has always been a sense of playful experiment. At its best, it has been a source of delight, of dialogue, of new art. At its worst, it has exacerbated the shallow egotism that can mark any medium and the self-aggrandisement that attends all the arts, since art always asks the attention of an audience to the work and persona of individuals. In league with one another and in opposition to one another, members of the network have established a community of dialogue that is now entering its fourth decade. When we recall that Dada flourished for a few brief years before dissolving, or that Abstract Expressionism hardly ever existed before it became history itself, that is an interesting fact. It suggests that the network may be a community, while correspondence art and mail art have grown beyond community into art forms, just as easel painting grew from an innovation to an art form. Different artists who use this medium will create the kinds of art with it that interest them.

It is precisely that fact that has made it possible for some members of what Robert Filliou termed "The Eternal Network" to pursue their spiritual concerns, the vision of a global community. It may be their action and concern that give rise to the fi fth phase in the history of mail art and correspondence art, or they may simply carry on within a larger frame. That's a story to be told in a few more years.

* * * * * *

(This text is based in part on Ken Friedman's 1984 article, "Mail Art History: The Fluxus Factor," an article appearing in "Mail Art Then and Now," a special mail art exhibition issue of *The Franklin Furnace Flue*, Vol. 4, issues 3 and 4, Winter 1984.)

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 2

NETWORKING: THE ORIGIN OF TERMINOLOGY

John Held Jr.

There is always someone asleep and someone
awake
Someone dreaming asleep and someone dreaming
awake
someone eating, someone hungry
someone fighting, someone loving
someone making money, someone broke
someone travelling, someone staying put
someone helping, someone hindering
someone enjoying, someone suffering, someone
indifferent
someone starting, someone stopping
the network is eternal.

– Robert Filliou[1]

Mail art and networking are descriptive terms often used among artists who exchange art and creative ideas by post, but to individuals unaware of these postal exchanges, mail art and networking are misunderstood terms. "Mail art," for instance, is commonly mistaken as *male* art. *Networking* is viewed as a yuppie glad-handing scheme to get ahead of the other fellow through new, fast and shallow connections made over cocktails. By now there are computer "networks" joining good ol' boy "networks," which only serves to confuse the issue.[2]

"Networking" and "mail art" have very distinct roots. According to Belgian mail artist Guy Bleus, the first terms for defining mail art activities "were e.g. 'flux-post,' 'mailings' and 'correspondence (art).' The term 'Mail-Art' has presumably been used for the first time in the early seventies. But it is historical(ly) hard to say 'exactly' who, where and when."[3]

Ray Johnson, the acknowledged pioneer of the medium, used the term *moticos* in the middle fifties. John Wilcock wrote in the first issue of the *Village Voice*, "I heard about them from a friend who inexplicably found himself on a moticos mailing list one day. 'I send lists either to people I think would be interested or people I think won't be interested,' explained Ray. There are 200 people on his mailing list so far, including Elsa Maxwell and the Museum of Modern Art's James Barr."[4]

Further on in the article Johnson admits, "I've got a big pile of things at home which will make moticos. They're really collages—paste-ups of pictures and pieces of paper, and so on—but that sounds too much like what they really are, so I call them moticos. It's a good word because it's both singular and plural and you can pronounce it how you like. However, I'm going to get a new word soon."[5]

The new word Johnson soon received, which came to characterize the continuing postal activity of between "thirty to fifty artists or non-artists at this time," was brought to him by Ed Plunkett. Plunkett was experimenting with the postal system at the time, unaware that others were involved in a similar vein. In the early 1960s he was finally introduced to Johnson by a mutual friend.

> I was fascinated by what I saw of these mailings. I then began to mail things to Ray. Soon I was hearing from Ray via the post and receiving small envelopes full of goodies often with instructions to mail some item to someone else. I enjoyed this new game of contacting people without the necessity of actually meeting them and going through the usual social amenities, which I felt in those days was a bore...This business was referred to as correspondence art, but I began to call it the 'New York Correspondence School.' It was a reference to the 'New York School,' meaning the leading group of mostly abstract painters that flourished then.[1]

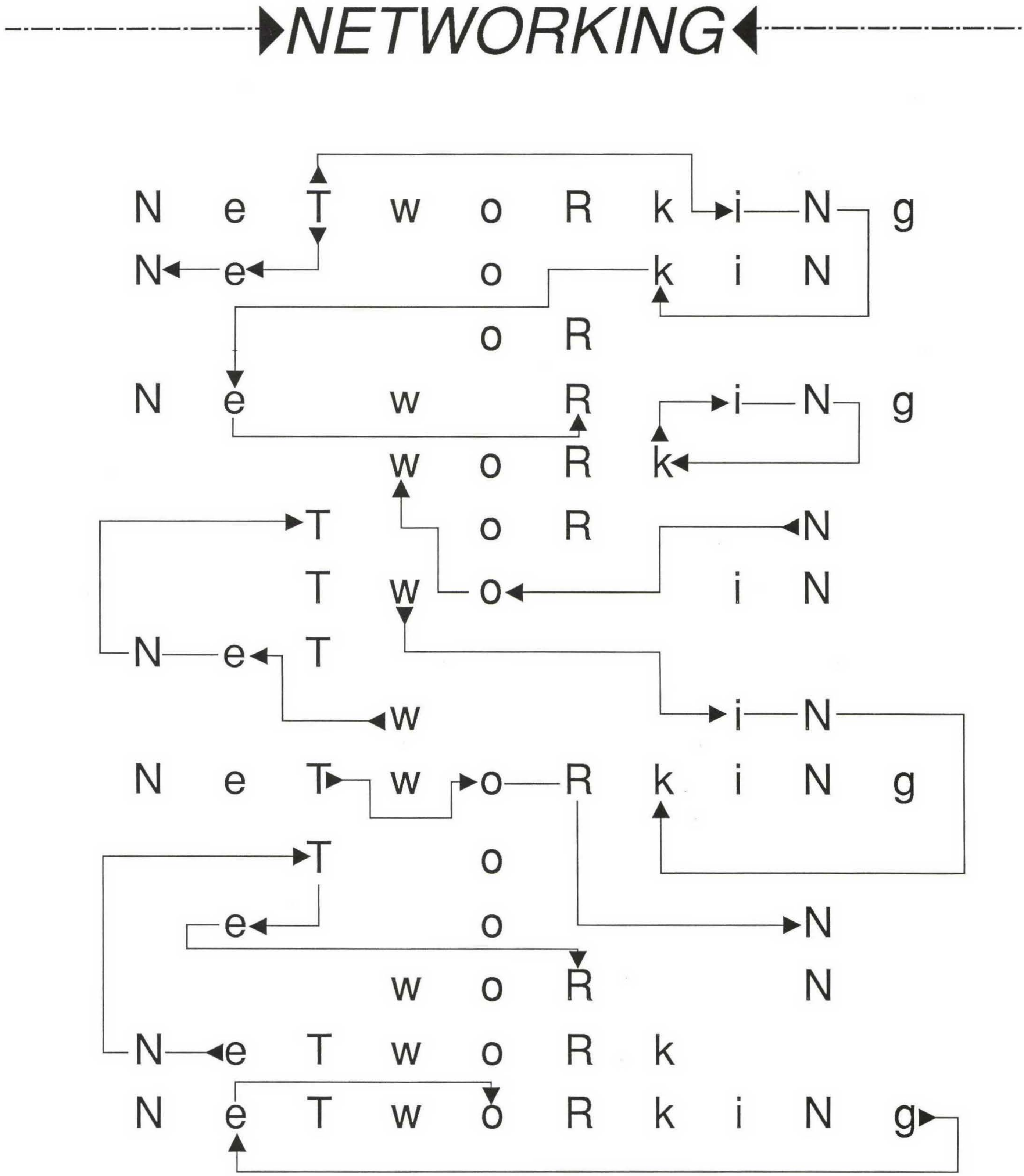


Figure 12. Kathy Ernst, *Networking*, U.S.A., 1991. Computer generated visual poem.

Johnson, however, made moticos of Plunkett's new description of his activity. The writer William Wilson, son of artist May Wilson and early correspondent of Johnson, began popularizing Johnson's postal correlations under the rubric of the *New York Correspondance School* in a number of international art journals. These actions by Wilson did much to increase reader interest in Johnson and his emerging network.

> The New York Correspondance School is an art of witty resemblances; it originates with Ray Johnson, but any number can play. It takes the 'New York School' of painters, an invention of careless art historians, and schools of art by correspondence in which famous artists teach commercial art through the mails, and it combines them into a satiric portmanteau that carries still other meanings.
>
> *Correspondence* is spelled *correspondance*, not in the French manner, but because a Ukrainian poster from the Lower East Side of Manhattan announces a *dance* in a word that looks like *3AbaBy* (three-a-baby). This poster *(dance, 3AbaBy)* became an image after Ann Wilson gave birth to twins and M.T. became pregnant; three-a-baby seemed a sign of the times... Clearly the truth for Ray Johnson is not correspondence to actuality (verisimilitude), but is correspondence of part to part (pregnant similarities that dance).[7]

By the time (1973) Johnson "killed" the New York Correspondance School in an unpublished letter to the New York Times,[8] the term *mail art* had already been used in several published works. The earliest appearances of mail art as a term can be found in two particularly important sources: Jean-Marc Poinsot's book *Mail Art: Communication a Distance Concept,* and David Zack's article in *Art in America,* "An Authentik and Historikal Discourse on the Phenomenon of Mail Art," In 1971 Poinsot writes of mail art:

> A large number of the artists in our book view the postal service as a means of expediting messages and objects, thereby creating a network for the exchange of works of art, parallel to and distinct from the generally prevailing systems. By mailing collages, theoretical texts, and objects to various addresses without asking for remuneration, the artists concerned have upset the laws of the marketplace. It is evident that a form of exchange does take place, but not a quantitative one. A particularly interesting example is that of Ray Johnson's correspondance school, with its large network of correspondents, which perform individual mailings or take part in coordinated action based on the initiative of a member of the group.[9]

Poinsot goes on to explain the title of the book and his preference for the term "mail art" rather "postal art":

> It isn't entirely satisfactory, but it does indicate some of the main points. MAIL ART. This expression underscores the use of postal material, while not neglecting the specific characteristics of the institution. It designates mailing, by which we mean sending a simple object or document through the postal system, as well as the system of exchange and the particular form through which the message is expressed. We have preferred the term 'mail art' to 'postal art', since it seems richer in connotations.[10]

Zack's article in the January–February 1973 issue of *Art in America* and Thomas Albright's "New Art School: Correspondence" (April, 1972 *Rolling Stone* magazine), were the first articles about mail art published in a context broader than the singular activity of Ray Johnson and his correspondance school. Zack matter-of-factly used the terms *mail art* and *mail artist* in describing the evolving West Coast and Canadian artists' communication by post, especially as it centered around the Canadian art group General Idea and their publication of *FILE* Magazine.

FILE had become the rallying point for the emerging international network which was beginning to germinate from the seedling Johnson had nurtured for the past fifteen years. Johnson was elevated to saintly proportions in its

pages. His "fan clubs" and "correspondance school" meetings were expanding to a new generation of active West Coast and Canadian participants.

In 1974, Herve Fischer published *Art et Communication Marginale*, which was an anthology of rubber stamps used by artists in the ever-growing circle of postal-based artists. Thousands of rubber stamp impressions are reproduced, but only two artists use rubber stamps with the words *mail art*, Bill Gaglione (Dadaland) and the late Robert Rehfeldt. It is interesting to note that Gaglione separates the words (as in his phrase *Quickkopy Mail Art*),[11] while Rehfeldt runs the words together (as in his rubber stamp MAILART).[12]

These variations in the construction of the word *mail art*, are further complicated by Guy Bleus' preferred usage of the word *Mail-Art*, which is capitalized and hyphenated. Bleus also notes that synonyms for Mail-Art include *post art, postal art, art-mail, correspondence art*, as well as regionalized usage such as *arte postale* (Italy), *Post-Kunst* (Germany and Netherlands), *art postale* (France), and *arte correo* (Spain, South America and Mexico).[13] In the Belgian art guide, *Stijlengids*, mail art is entered under the heading of *Post kunst*, and alternate terms are given as *Correspondence art*, *Envois*, *Mail art* and *Stamp-art.*[14] In an equivalent American publication, *Contemporary Art Trends 1960–1980*, the main entry is *Mail Art*, while synonyms are given as *art mail*, *postcard art*, *letter art*, *correspondence art* and *junk mail.*[15]

Although it might appear to some that the many different variations of the names and spellings of the phrase used to connote postal activity is a reflection of the *confusion* inherent to the medium, rather it should be inferred that the variations are a symptom of the *decentralization* which characterizes the medium. Participants in the medium make their own contribution and write their own history. There is no central leadership or centralized publication. There are only people gathering together through the international postal service in concentric circles for fellowship and the desire to share art and information.

For this reason, although postal-based artists may disagree if they are really *mail artists* or *correspondence artists*, they all concur that they are part of an international network of artists. But the terms *network* and *networking* are themselves confusing. The term derives from a concept developed by Robert Filliou and George Brecht of an *Eternal Network* of artists. Brecht and Filliou were part of Fluxus, a movement whose actions strongly influenced mail art. Mail art inherited its poetic and Dada tendencies from Ray Johnson and its collaborative approach from Fluxus mailings. Fluxus strove for the unity of artists in many areas: joint performances, collective publications and multiples, as well as cooperative housing arrangements. These utopian and practical ideals and concerns had a significant impact in stimulating the worldwide cooperation found in contemporary mail art networking.

The Eternal Network was conceived by Filliou and Brecht, who had set up a "sort of workshop" in the south of France during the Summer of 1965 (Fig. 13). This workshop, called the Cedille qui Sourit, was intended to be "an international center of permanent creation."[16] In March 1968, a new dimension was added to this idea:

> ...over the month, we had developed the concept of the Fête Permanente, or the Eternal Network as we chose to translate it into English, which, we think, should allow us to spread this spirit more efficiently than before... In April we announced our intentions in a poster and sent it to our numerous correspondents... In practical terms, in order to make artists, first, realize they are part of a network and, therefore, may as well refrain from their tiresome spirit of competition, we intend, when we do perform, to advertise other artists' performances together with our own. But this is not enough. The artist must realize also that his is part of a wider network, la Fete Permanente going on around him all the time in all parts of the World.[17]

By 1973, Filliou had expanded this concept of an Eternal Network and communicated his concerns through the September issue of *FILE* magazine, which had emerged as the central clearinghouse for the emerging international network of postal-based artists. Filliou wrote:

> 1. Poincaré (died 1912) is said to have been the last research mathematician to know all the mathematics of his time. Minimum information on topflight mathematics would require a book of at least 2,000 pages, more than any living mathematician could comprehend.
> 2. Replace 'mathematician' with 'artist'. 'Mathematics' by 'Art' (but whom to replace Poincaré by?).
> 3. If it is true that information about and knowledge of all modern art research is more than any one artist could comprehend, then the concept of the 'avant-garde' is obsolete. With incomplete knowledge, who can say who is in front, and who ain't?
> 4. I suggest that considering each artist as part of an Eternal Network is a much more useful concept...[18]

The following year, the idea of the Eternal Network was given wide exposure when an international *Deccadance* (a takeoff on Johnson's Correspon*dance* School) was held to celebrate the one million and eleventh birthday of Art in Hollywood, California "with approval in principle from Robert Filliou and the Eternal Network."[19] The event proved to be one of the first large-scale meetings of postal artists, and was a pivotal precursor of the Tourism movement in 1980s mail art networking. Michael Morris, of Vancouver's Image Bank (an early compiler of network mailing lists), wrote in *FILE*, "The Hollywood Deccadance would be the first to bring together an international group of artists who have been working together on the subliminal." Furthermore, Morris stated, "You've probably heard rumours of our activities but have been at a loss to understand how you can find out more about them and participate in the network consciousness on the tips of so many people's tongues." He signed off as, "Michael Morris (for the Eternal Network)."[20]

It is safe to say that from this time onward the term Eternal Network came to represent a poetic view of the gathering mailstream of international correspondents tied together through the postal systems of the world. Michael Crane writes in his book, *Correspondence Art: Source Book for the Network of International Postal Art Activity*:

> As a name, Eternal Network has been substituted for or used as a reference to Mail Art. While this may be somewhat out of context, it is an appropriate reference for the positive, spiritual qualities and communication potentials for correspondence art... Filliou is significant to mail art for the subtle but lasting effects of his poetic consciousness...[21]

The poem which begins with this article is just an indication of the consciousness that Filliou encapsulated. The mail art network is a revolving door with "someone starting, someone stopping." Correspondents come and go but there is always a core group willing to impart the history and process of the network.

Mail art, correspondence art, postal art, the Eternal Network—call it what you will. The process itself is hard enough to define. It can be composed of personal correspondence, or through mass photocopied mailings to mail art exhibitions. It has been said that to name a thing is to define it. So perhaps it is only fair that as fluid a situation as postal activity by artists is, it is best described by a poem. The network is eternal.

* * * * * *

1. Robert Filliou, "Research on the Eternal Network," *FILE*, September 1973, p. 7.
2. *Correspondence art* is better suited as a descriptive definition of the intertwining relationships that are present in postal exchanges.
3. Guy Bleus, *Commonpress 56*, Tienen, Belgium: Museum Het Toreke, 1984, p. 14.
4. John Wilcox, "The Village Square," *Village Voice*, October 26, 1955, p. 3.
5. Ibid.
6. Edward Plunkett, "From Pre- to Post-Postal Art," *Franklin Furnace Flue*, 1984, No. 3 and 4, p. 5.

7. William Wilson, "NY Correspondance School," *Art and Artists*, April 1966, p. 54.
8. Mike Crane, "The Origins of Correspondence Art," *Correspondence Art: Source Book for the Network of International Postal Art Activity*, San Francisco: Contemporary Arts Press, 1984, p. 87.
9. Jean-Marc Poinsot, *Mail Art: Communication a Distance Concept*, Paris: Cedic, 1971, p. 17.
10. Ibid. p. 18.
11. Herve Fischer, *Art et Communication Marginale*, Paris: Balland, 1974, p. 99.
12. Ibid. p. 193.
13. Guy Bleus, p. 16.
14. Stan Jaeger, *Stijlengids*, Belgium: Cantecleer, 1985, p. 89.
15. Doris Bell, *Contemporary Art Trends 1960—1980*, New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1981, p. 49.
16. Robert Filliou, "Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts," Cologne: Verlag Gebr., 1970, p. 205.
17. Ibid.
18. Robert Filliou, "Research on the Eternal Network," p. 7.
19. Carl Loeffler, ed., Performance Anthology, San Francisco: Contemporary Arts Press, 1980, p. 98.
20. Michael Morris, *FILE*, December 1973, pp. 34–35.
21. Michael Crane, p. 98.

* * * * * *

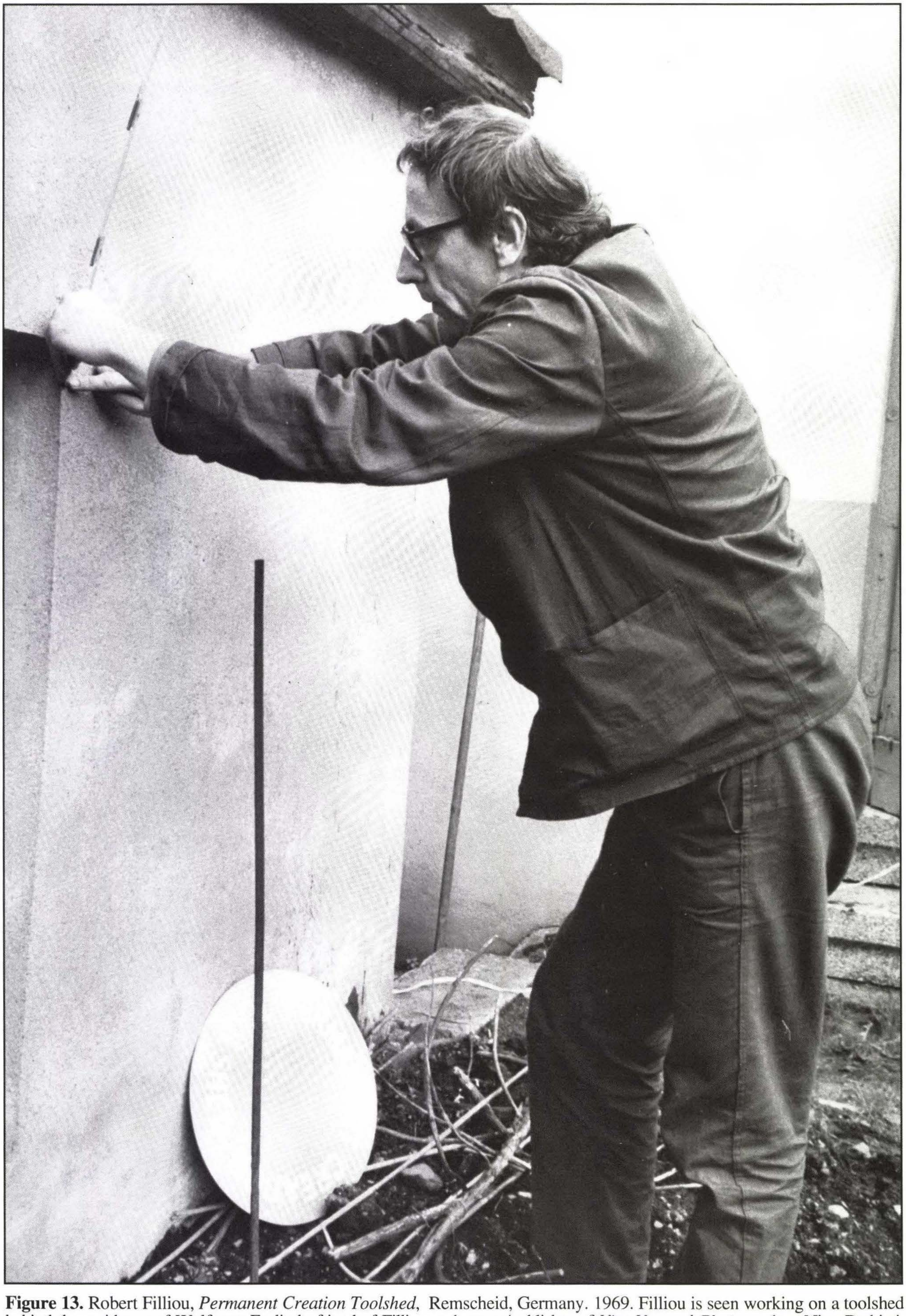


Figure 13. Robert Filliou, *Permanent Creation Toolshed*, Remscheid, Germany. 1969. Filliou is seen working on a toolshed behind the residence of Wolfgang Feelisch, friend of Filliou and owner/publisher of *Vice Versand*. Photographer: Nino Barbieri. Photograph compliments of Marianne Filliou and Wolfgang Feelisch.

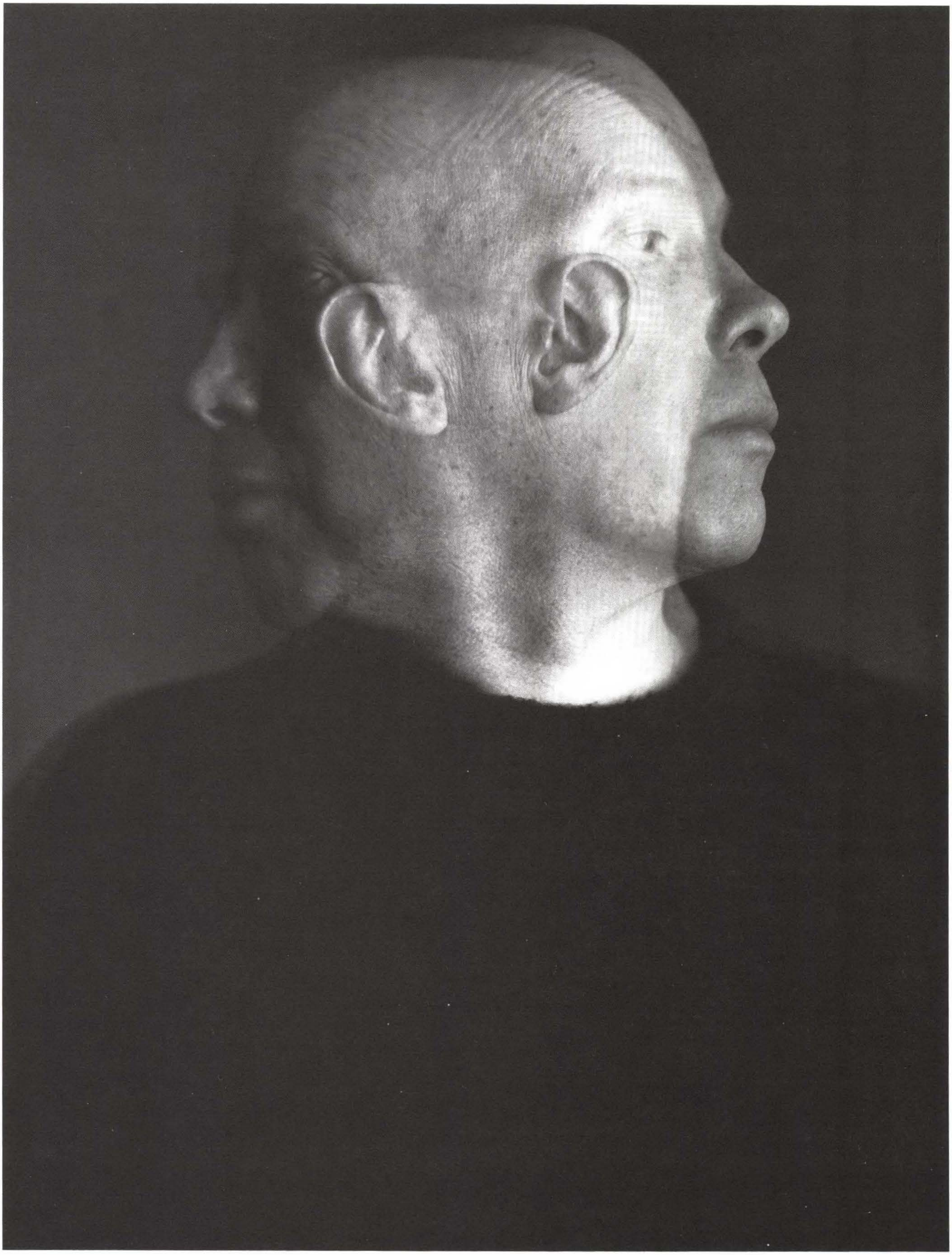


Figure 14. Timothy Greenfield-Saunders, *Photograph of Ray Johnson*, U.S.A., 1983. Courtesy Timothy Greenfield-Saunders, New York.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 3

THE MAILED ART OF RAY JOHNSON

Clive Phillpot

Ray Johnson is a natural collagist; one of his principal activities is bringing disparate entities into conjunction. His collages have been intermittently exhibited and reproduced in books, catalogs, and magazines, especially the mid-fifties collages that incorporate printed images of James Dean (Fig. 16) and Elvis Presley, which are frequently incorporated into the early history of pop art. The increasing familiarity of these works has tended to distract from his other more radical achievements, for Ray Johnson has also conceived events, given performances, made books, designed buttons, and even made a sole watercolor—of a watercooler! But history is ultimately just as likely to smile on him because of the medium that he has made his own: mail art.

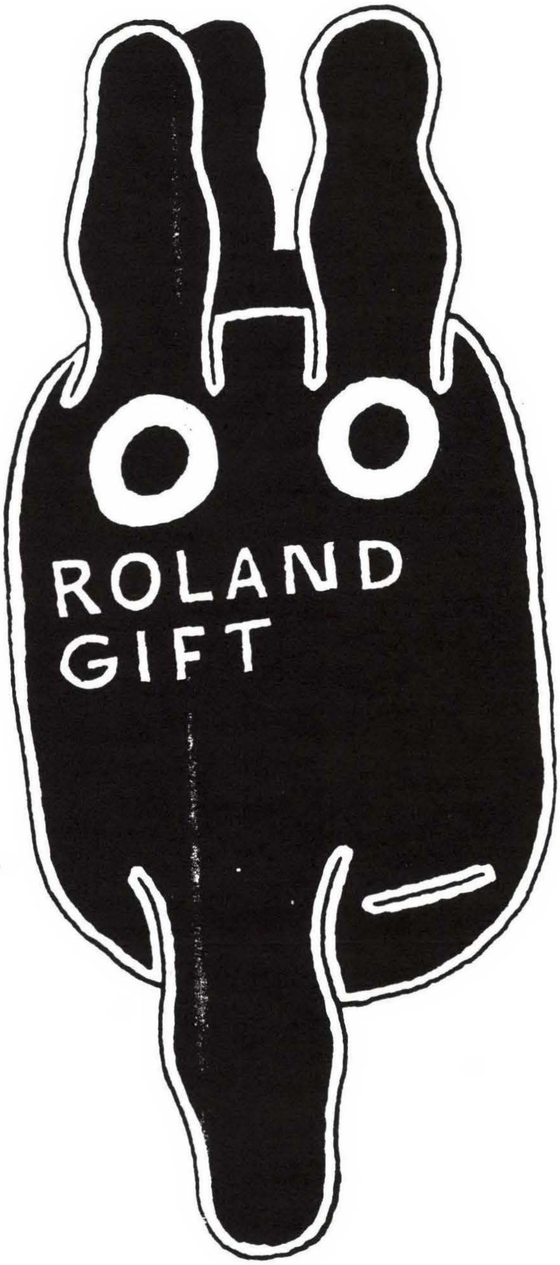
Mail art, simply defined, is art that utilizes the postal service, or, in a secondary manifestation, is art that takes a form relating to postal products or apparatus—for example, artists' postage stamps and artists' rubber stamps. On many occasions, Ray Johnson has been named the father of mail art, also the grandfather, and even the "sugar dada."

As with most phenomena, a history of mail art can be cobbled together to give it ancestors, connections with the art of the past, or to validate it. People's desire for time-blessed roots is strange and strong. The Futurists and Dada artists are often dragged in as progenitors for mail art, but until Ray Johnson developed it as a distinct verbal-visual activity, from his early beginnings in the mid-forties, mail art was incidental and does not warrant separate treatment as a distinct form of art.

Ray Johnson's example and his legend have triggered a veritable explosion of mail art practitioners, and, as is the case with many other pioneers in the arts and other disciplines, he has left an academy in his wake — and a very unusual one. This academy, open to all, is international. It has no name and no fixed membership; anyone can play. But academies need rules. Thus, the principle of public manifestation of the academy, the mail art exhibition, is conducted according to standard operating procedures. Anyone may announce and organize such an exhibition, and decide upon a theme, but every work submitted must be exhibited, and each participant must receive a record of the complete exhibition, whether a simple checklist, address list, catalog, or booklet.

Although this democratic process operates under the rubric of art, it has much more to do with communication and networking—the latter concept owing its application in the art world principally to Robert Filliou. Looking for finished works of art in a mail art show, or, more particularly, highlighting or selecting the most creative works, is not only contrary to the rules of the network, it is also inappropriate. Nonetheless, there is a low level of wit and insight in many mail art exhibits. Even so, the mail art networks that come into public view through such exhibitions or their documentation are extraordinary phenomena with immense potential. They may presage a new art paradigm utilizing not only the postal system but also, and increasingly, linked computers.

But public mail art of this kind is almost contradictory. The essence of mail art is one-to-one communication, and this is the core, with variations, of Ray Johnson's art and that of other committed mail artists. But this simple, essential form of communication, employed so imaginatively and idiosyncratically by Ray Johnson, effectively questions many of the norms of contemporary art.



When one writes a letter to a friend or relative, one is presenting, or making a present of, one's thoughts and reports as well as the letter itself (Fig. 15). When one receives mail art from Ray Johnson, one is receiving a gift of art. An ongoing practice based on gifts, or gift exchange, is rather extraordinary in developed countries in the late twentieth century. The current convention that the value of art depends upon public exposure and a price tag is dented by this practice. (But the business of art will surely win out in the end.)

Another concept that Ray Johnson's procedures call into question is the idea of the original work of visual art. His mailings include originals, copies of originals, and copies of copies, thanks to the photocopier and sometimes the offset press; however, a particular mailing conveys its message, directly or obliquely, regardless of the fact that it contains original drawings or statements, or copies of work, old or new. What is in the envelope (and occasionally on the envelope) is the work. If one thinks of Ray Johnson's mail art as a writing



Figure 15. Above, Ray Johnson, *Roland Gift*, 1991, Collection Clive Phillpot.

Figure 16. Right, Ray Johnson, *James Dean/Moticos*, 1957. Collection Clive Phillpot.

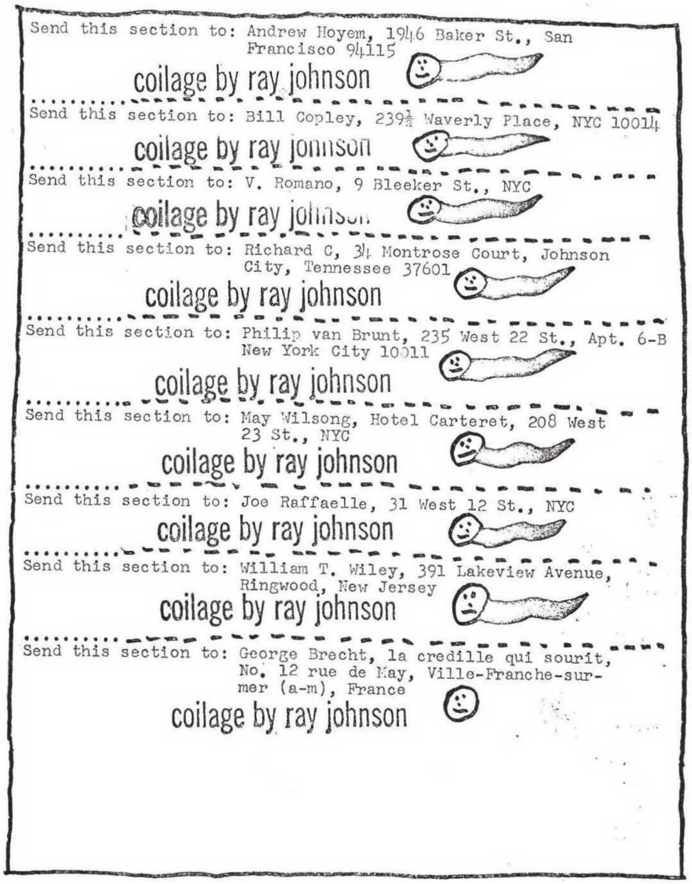


Figure 17. Ray Johnson, *Coilage by Ray Johnson.* Collection The Museum of Modern Art Library.



Figure 18. Ray Johnson, *Buddha University/Alfred Barr.* Collection The Museum of Modern Art Library.

activity, as he has suggested, then analogies with a writer's correspondence, which includes quotations from past writings — poetry, for instance — throws his work into perspective. In the writer's correspondence, quotations convey their substance, whether they are handwritten, typewritten, or photo-copied. So it is with Ray Johnson's mailings; either a copy or the original will tell the same story. For instance, "Dear Whitney Museum, i hate you. Love, Ray Johnson", bears repetition and will be as fresh as the day it was minted to someone seeing it for the first time.

Ray Johnson's mailings of new work and/or recycled copies of earlier work — and even recycled work originally sent to him by other artists — differ in another way from most current art activities. Not only are they one-to-one communications, they are frequently made with the particular recipient in mind. Even when all or most of the elements in the mail piece are recyclings or reprintings, that particular collection of items may well be assembled in a unique combination, and include, perhaps, images or words provoked by that person, even though current Johnsonian preoccupations will probably figure in the mailing as well.

Needless to say, Ray Johnson plays variations on this basic practice. There is a form of his mail art that transcends

one-to-one mailings by involving three people, when it includes the instruction (Fig. 17) "send to." Ray Johnson sends a mail art package for a specific person to an intermediary who is requested to "send to" the ultimate recipient. Frequently, the intermediary, who is allied in some way to the recipient, is involved in this particular process simply as a witness. This process may also be regarded as a variation on the convention "c.c." (carbon copy): the intermediary see/sees the original communication, thereby sharing in something of mutual interest. But it is Ray Johnson himself who is really in the middle rather than the intermediary, since he is bringing two people together, albeit conceptually, if they will play the game. "Send to" links people as nodes in the Johnsonian network; it joins the dots and makes lines in space. But here the intermediary is passive, and merely has the power to decline the invitation to "send to" the ultimate recipient.

There is another variation on this process, however, that involves Ray Johnson's collaboration with the intermediary (Fig.18). The latter may receive a sheet or a piece in the mail with the instruction "add to" and "return to Ray Johnson." This invitation to collaborate with Ray Johnson, and actively participate in his art, is a remarkably open attitude for an artist to adopt. In spite of the fact that Ray Johnson is directing the traffic, the intermediary who is invited to "add to" is endowed with a creative role in the communication with the third party, or in their response to Ray Johnson's request.

Ray Johnson's practice, as expressed in his mail art—the idea of the one-to-one communication; the irrelevance of what is physically original; the collaboration; the gift; the casting of art into the mailstream—adds up to a view of art that is not only a true alternative to most current art practices but implicitly questions the normal machinery of the Western art world. In fact, such an attitude to art may have more in common with the practices of other nonliterate cultures—except for his dependence upon friendly postal workers as art handlers, and on copying technology.

And yet, Ray Johnson is tuned in to the current preoccupations of the art world—his rubber stamp "Collage by Sherrie Levine" alone is testimony to this. His assemblies of art-world figures also reveal his close attention to the scene. But while he revels in the various personalities, his alternative practice does connect with larger currents in recent art history. In spite of the unusual, utterly personal character of his art and his methods and his seminal role in mail art, Ray Johnson can be seen to have ties to pop art, to early conceptual and performance art, as well as to Fluxus and other manifestations. When the history of the recent past is rewritten, when the revolutionary changes in art in the '50s and '60s are better defined, and when there is a more perceptive articulation of elements that are common in the work of George Brecht, Marcel Broodthaers, Robert Filliou, Allan Kaprow, Yves Klein, Sol LeWitt, George Maciunas, Piero Manzoni, Seth Siegelaub, Ben Vautier, and Lawrence Weiner, Ray Johnson will be an essential additional figure in this reassessment.

Although he follows and closely observes the art world from his fastness in Locust Valley—whether by proxy, via the press, publications, personal reports, or the telephone—Ray Johnson also keeps it, and its practices, at arm's length. Much of his art skirts the established art world. Even when he is invited to participate in a group show, he is as likely as not to exhibit, or to declare that his contribution will be a Ray Johnson nothing (or nothang), or, recently, to slip in with just a Ray Johnson button, as to make a splash in a given space. He has had relatively few one-person museum exhibitions, because he has not encouraged, and has even discouraged, curators. This reticence or abnegation contrasts markedly with his frequent incorporation and promotion of his own image and history in his mail art. Although such contrary behavior contributes to his legend, it also demonstrates Ray Johnson's refusal to be co-opted, except on carefully considered terms.

And there is no doubt that Ray Johnson is a living legend (or a living dead legend, if his reports of his death in 1989 are to be believed) (Fig. 19). His serious playfulness with the art world and his rare visibility, plus the sometimes notorious events that he has initiated or been involved with, such as his robbing event, his pink wigging, his nothings, as well as the proliferating versions of his own physiognomy sent out in the mail, his ubiquitous bunny-head portraits, and, finally and most particularly, the quality and elusiveness of his imagination and visual inventions, have all contributed to this legend.

So, too, have Ray Johnson's various institutional inventions, particularly the New York Correspondence School (a.k.a. New York Correspondance School, and New York Corraspondence School), whose demise was announced in a letter to The *New York Times* (1973) addressed to "Deaths." That the letter was not published perhaps explains how the announcement turned out to be premature. (In any case, it was reborn as Buddha University.) He has also initiated many fan clubs, usually under the auspices of the New York Correspondence School, such as the Marcel Duchamp Fan Club, the Jean Dubuffet Fan Club, the Shelley Duvall Fan Club, and the Paloma Picasso Fan Club, as well as the Blue Eyes Club (and its Japanese division the Brue Eyes Crub), the Spam Radio Club, and such events as the Locust Valley Biennale. Ray Johnson has actually called meetings of some of these organizations, often to the puzzlement of those invited.

People are enrolled in the New York Correspondence School through a communication from Ray Johnson. (Fig. 20) Upon receiving this information and, perhaps, other communications, they are, of course, drawn inextricably into the Johnsonian network. Other people, as well as members, receive mailings from him: longtime correspondents, friends, and acquaintances, either out of the blue or in response to their missives. But he also writes to people he has only read about

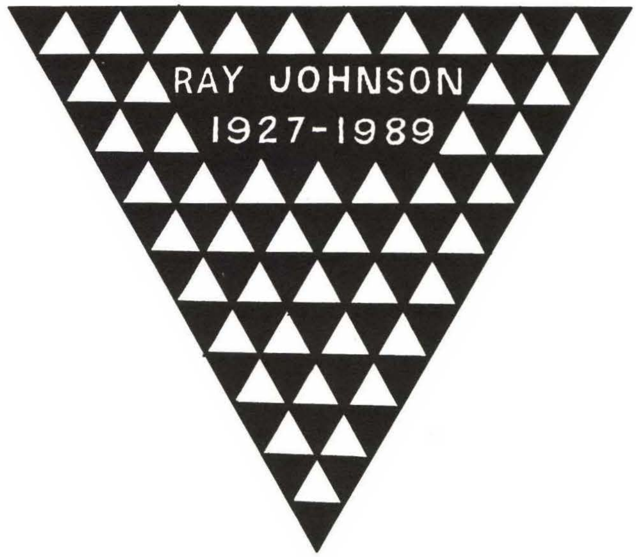


Figure 19. Ray Johnson, *Ray Johnson 1927–1989*, 1989. Collection of Clive Phillpot.

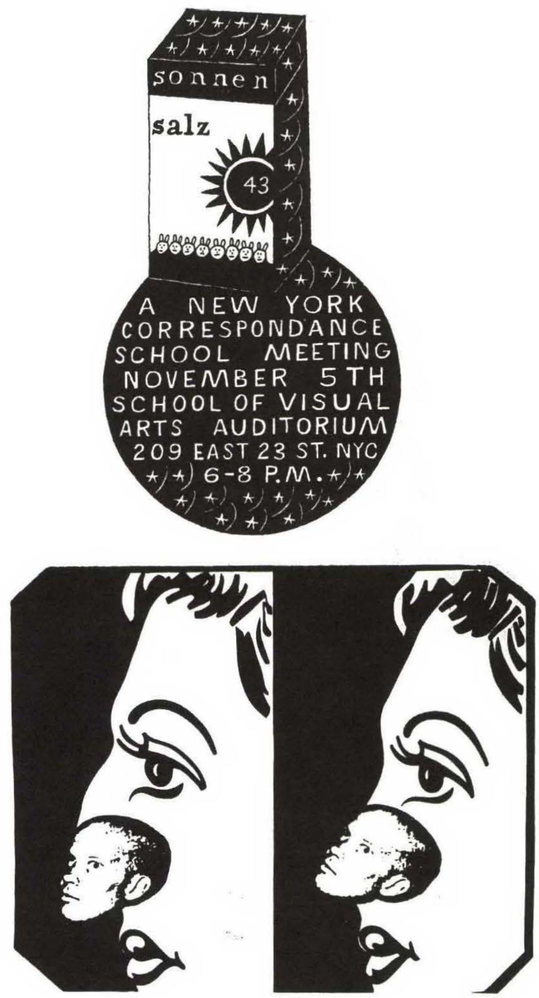


Figure 20. Ray Johnson, *NYCS Meeting November 5th/Salz*. Collection Clive Phillpot.

or heard about in the media. usually there is some overt—or obscure—Johnsonian reason for such communication with the famous or the ordinary. But for Ray Johnson it is enough that a person has been recorded in the public realm, perhaps in a newspaper or just in a phone book, for them to become a correspondent.

A side-effect of these mailings and enrollments is that a great many people in the art world have at one time glimpsed Ray Johnson through the mailbox, and therefore have a direct, frequently fragmentary, and possibly perplexing view of him. This, too, contributes to the legend.

To add to this, other artists, especially mail artists, have contributed to his near-mythic status by making rubber stamps or copies of his face (Fig. 21) and his bunny heads, or by concocting epigrams about him—for example, "Ray Johnson has been dropped" (just as he has dropped others from his own New York Correspondence School!)—and have disseminated impressions or copies of these to many corners of the world through the mail. It is a rare mail art exhibition catalog that does not have some reference to Ray Johnson.

But the ultimate key to the significance of Ray Johnson is what and how he communicates. Although the collage principle informs most of his work, the pieces that are more relief-like, that are framed and exhibited for sale, fit the mold of traditional artworks, in the sense of being at home in the object-oriented economy of the art world and, more particularly, in that they do not surrender their meanings quickly or definitively. They present the viewer with a congealed image that is a resolution of a process of composition, building, editing, or refining—even though they refer beyond themselves. These works are more like hedgehogs, rounded up compactly into balls, whereas Ray Johnson's mailworks are more like foxes, darting all over the place.

The Johnsonian brand of mail art has its own characteristics. A theme will sometimes preoccupy him for a

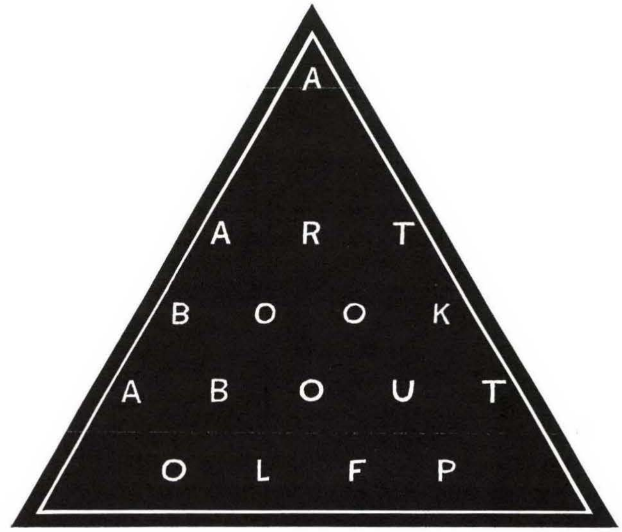


Figure 21. Ray Johnson, *An Art Book About Olfp*. Collection of Chuck Welch.



Figure 22 E.Z. Smith, *Ray-Ban Johnson*, 1991. Collection of Chuck Welch.

time, but its elucidation may not be confined to one correspondent. Thus, any one recipient may get only a partial view of the working out of the idea. (Fig. 22) Pages of his *Book About Modern Art* and *A Book About Death* have come to reside in different places. But even while exploring a theme, Ray Johnson's mind and hand dart in other directions, for one of the characteristics of his mailworks—and his collages, since they are frequently cannibalized—is that they are always subject to change. Open both to outside influences and interventions, and to the choreography of his thoughts, he generates strung-out and scattered riches.

Almost invariably, he breaks out of patterns or formulae, as the zigzags of the *Book About Modern Art* uniquely demonstrate. His fondness for sets of things or people goes only so far; there is nearly always one item or person in a set that does not quite fit.

Personalities who have solicited or attracted media attention, (Fig. 23) movie stars, art stars, friends, and acquaintances jostle with his many selves and creations for seats in the rooms of Ray Johnson's mind, along with everyday objects that have also acquired (Fig. 24) a special status such as the almost-animate potato mashers. Although initially he may have become aware of these people through movies or magazines, he has often pulled them into his network by writing or telephoning them—people who would not know him from the boxer Jack Johnson. (It should perhaps be noted that Ray Johnson was mistakenly included in a 1973 biographical dictionary, entitled *Afro-American Artists.*) To

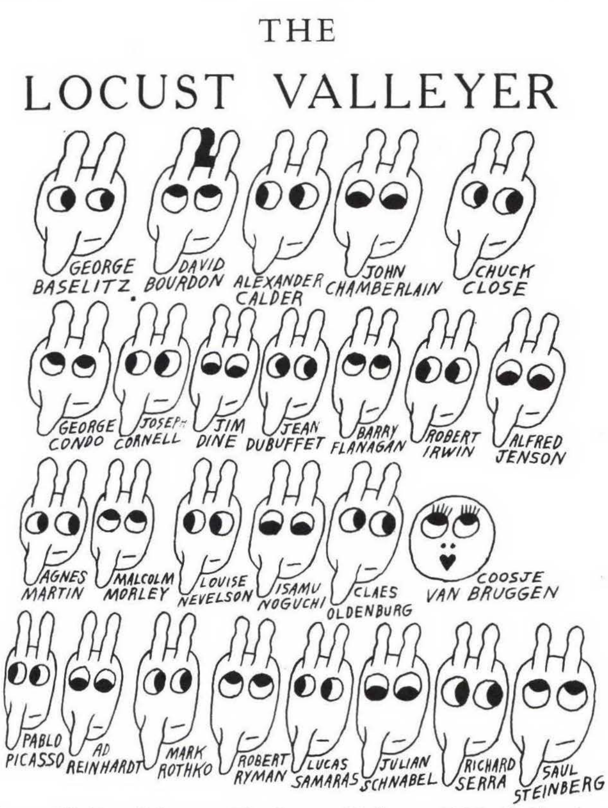


Figure 23. Ray Johnson, *The Locust Valleyer*, 1990. Collection The Museum of Modern Art Library.

the mass of readers learning about such personalities, they may be virtual fantasies or media constructs, but Ray Johnson makes them corporeal for himself and anchors them to reality through correspondence or conversation. (His use of the telephone is inevitably less well documented than his use of the mailways; it is also more instrumental, of course. Conversations with friends, acquaintances, and perfect strangers are important parts of his communications activity; therefore, his postal network is also overlaid with a telephonic network.)

Examining the elements of Ray Johnson's work, or disentangling the threads of his activity, would not be so worthwhile if he were not a superb graphic artist who pursues the embodiment of his thoughts with consummate economy and skill—and wit. The movements of his hand are responsive to the fluidity of his verbal and visual ideas. He animates the most unpromising shapes; he makes life flicker in the simplest forms. He is highly sensitive to words, both the way they look and the way they sound. He detects words within words, puns, and other oddities as easily as a heat-seeking missile rips through skeins of camouflage. He shapes letters and words deliberately and effortlessly, giving them, too, an organic life. He also knows how to animate the page, how to make the white spaces buzz. He combines pictures and texts in new, hybrid forms that seem genetically determined.

Mailings from Ray Johnson are a concatenation of ideas, sometimes distinct or decipherable on the constituent sheets of a correspondence, sometimes slipping and sliding into one another. Thus, Johnsonian physiognomical and biographical images mingle with recycled images of earlier work, with facets of a current preoccupation, with texts, with such new ideas as flop art or buxus, with bunny-head variants, with references to current art, and with other uncategorizable motifs and insertions, almost paralleling the flux of thought itself. Any of these elements may also be overprinted with other images or texts, so that a mailing may be literally multilayered.

Reading such mail is simpler than reading a collage, for the layered elements can generally be isolated and examined. But Ray Johnson's mind is so fertile, information-rich, and cross-connected, so full of potential visual and verbal associations, metaphors, puns, and rhymes, that while the flavor of his work may be enjoyed, some of the ingredients may remain mysterious. An unanticipated incident, image, or remark sets the Johnsonian circuits humming, and images and ideas print out that relate overtly or obscurely to the stimulus. Ray Johnson's thinking is marvelously fluid and full of Leonardesque eddies. His ideas move and change, swerve and submerge, but continue on like a river.

* * * * * *

"The Mailed Art of Ray Johnson" was originally published in the exhibition catalogue *More Works by Ray Johnson 1951–1991*, Goldie Paley Gallery, Moore College of Art And Design, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1991. This version differs slightly from the first printing.



Figure 24. Ray Johnson, *My Work/Potato Mashers*, Collection The Museum of Modern Art Library.

CHAPTER 4

POSTAGE ON MY BROW

Tom Cassidy

Mail art is brash, deliberate, shallow, substantive, cryptic! Things mailed are made art by an affixing of postage and an allowing aesthetic ken. Mail art is inspired, unholy, goofy, dead-aim didactic, lame! Messages pass between kindred spirits, effrontery from afar. In its natural habitat of mail-waves, it is priceless; not sold or acquired for half a cent or half a million, it's free! I kid you not. Mail art isn't just noncommercial, it's anti-commercial. It's an international, intermedial, postage-ballasted network, too large and unstable, too altruistic and defiant for regular art machineries to ever fully domesticate and redefine.

Mail art is reckless, kind, subversive, petty, reactionary! It makes mailboxes museums without walls. Artworks borne both in and out are of every origin, quality and medium. It is revolutionary, sentimental, dated (sic!), inane, therapeutic! Neither caffeine nor thesaurus are needed to make this spew more feverish. Mail artists are quasi-pen-pals engaged in irregular blab and chatter and swap, people from all walks of life in like-minded discourse 'round the world. That much of what they send and do is or isn't art is up to you; you're the curator at your address and you decide, you pick and choose your circle, stay calm and glib like me, or terrorize the mail with different tack.

Envelope and postcard specialists notwithstanding, mail artists needn't bend to codes of acceptability, flirt with censors or quirky buyers, soften blows or cover certain facts. They do whatever they want, limited only by the skin-deep restrictions of postal services. And though there's an already unusual distance between creators and their products, mail artists often use one or more pseudonyms, names of greater power and/or play than simple anonymity. From the wry Greet-O-Matic to the shocking Adolph Hitler Fan Club;[1] from the location-inspired Tarzan Savannah (Tarazana, California, not Savannah, Georgia), occupant, GeORge in GeORgia and Avenue Y School of Heart (Avenue Y, Brooklyn)[2] to official-sounding fabrications like the National Academy of Conceptualists, Fat City School of Finds Art, The Western Dakota Junk Company[3] and Ray Johnson's seminal New York Correspondence School; from the helpful World's 183rd Greatest Artist[4] to the disorienting roster at Al Ackerman's clinic,[5] where the good doctor feeds enough alter-egos to fill Congress. For most of my mail art career (my mom encouraged me with "Listen, you can always do neurosurgery in your spare time!"), I've been Musicmaster.

During my twenty years as an active correspondence artist, I've amassed a collection of 25,000 mailworks, and that from a relatively laid-back pace and web. I've received an entire gamut of mailable items: quickprint manifestoes, xeroxed collages, smallpress ephemera (Eterna!), remarkable mailzines, limited edition books, toney broadsides and long, opiated soliloquies,[6] a wax-sealed bottle (with message within) to hurl into the sea,[7] notes to attach to strings on helium-inflated balloons, a violin-shard performance document,[8] a hand-cancelled fastfood hamburger (one of the few items I didn't save), and a plywood puzzle-piece postcard;[9] drawings, watercolors, scripts, dolls, toys, advice, sculptures, and a surprising number of things flattened, made mailable.

My Musicmaster moniker, chosen more to cloak than to brag any expertise in aural arts, has itself prompted a lot of mail, usually from among recipients of mail-show lists on

which Musicmaster appears. I've received lots of cassettes (white noise meditations to the rocking surrealism of Nunzio Six-Fingers to pop-skewering collages by the Tape Beatles)[10] which, until I married into a functioning sound system in 1986, usually went unheard. I've been mailed several copies of a 1920s novel titled *Music Master*, a slew of MusicMaster-brand harmonicas, round record-like postcards, pieces beautifully decorated with musical notation, and lots of queries for my opinion (exalted by name selection alone) on bands. But my favorite made-for-Musicmaster pieces remain 1) a jagged, crimson-edged postcard of glued-together-and-painted LP pieces by Guido Bondoli – Art Created from Art Destroyed – and 2) from Science Holiday Productions, an LP shattered to fit into tiny envelope marked "Fragile!" in order to earn the Post Office's rubber-stamped apology for its condition. These two works best capture my belief that most music, assaulting us relentlessly from passing cars and backgrounds, is best enjoyed in smaller doses.

Of all creations received, however, the most striking and memorable have nothing to do with my name or whereabouts, though the very limited-edition nature of each underscores the value and importance mail-artists assign to many exchanges. From my personal history of hundreds of outstanding mailworks, I want to randomly pluck just five:

1) A paintbrush, hardened layer of red latex on bristles, lettered TULIP along its shaft; a mid–'70s masquerading artifact by Fletcher Copp.

2) H.G. Leissl's *Henderson's Book* (edition of 25; 1977), an example (per se) of format/content/other minimumstandardswhich must be met in order to be mailed at book rate; the thing is the thing is the thing explained, as dictated by postal authorities.

3) The "oDDs aND ENds iN aN ENvelOpe isSUe" of Chuck Stake's *Images and Information* magazine (edition of 200; 1978); a mindboggling, painstakingly found/copied/cut/doctored/assembled collection of flyers, articles, news bites, headlines (trimmed to stand alone), collage fragments, words (free-floating snips), quotes, smaller envelopes with similar ill-assorted surprises within, snips, blips, lines, odds and ends; even my penchant for lists could never name the gallimaufry of stuff in this delightful, ridiculous tour de force; Chuck, then the avatar of boredom, spent more time on a single copy of this release than the average person spends on childrearing in an entire year! He could've painted my house in less time!

4) E.Z. Smith's *Tepco Beach Odyssey* (edition of 25; 1987), a two-sided, accordion-folded narrative and photo album (ten color prints slipped into rubber-stamped-then-razor-slit photo corners) about the industrial-strength, sensible dishware products, now quaint and collectible, of Tepco China, and the company's former dump sit—Tepco Beach—where endless potsherds erode in the surf. A cup handle hangs from the cover.

5) John Held Jr.'s harrowing archeology, *A World Bibliography of Mail-Art* (Dallas Public Library, first edition of 250, 1989), is an ambitious book, both impressive and (admittedly) incomplete. In tidying up a chunk of maildom with alphabetized, cross-referenced, domesticated routines, Held's work is an ironic counterpoint to a network without common walls/oaths/goals/talents/ulterior motives/Specific Media!/backgrounds; in its enthusiastic tackle of the tackleable, it's the point as well. A resource to serve even us naysayers as supportive roster (without proffered pecking orders or routing-slip essays/viewfinders invariably "legitimizing" other substantial overviews), the *Bibliography* is ultimately the precious document of a performance project, a mail art milestone.

Others' choices would reflect widely varying perspectives and opinions, likely citing pieces significant in a certain circle or clique or continuum, or only those that by coincidence or design demand popular or critical attention beyond the mail community. Many (usually veteran) correspondents have purer criteria for what makes mail...mail art, from greater focus on, or manipulation of, the postal service's role[11] to the deliberate cultivation or selection of a stable-chain-pyramid-troupe-audience, that can quickly span continents, for a specific show or advocacy.[12]

With as many as 50,000 active mail artists,[13] each possessing impressive or personally influential mailworks the rest of us may never see—let alone similarly experience—between the water bill and a flyer for cardigan sod, while naked in tub and humming industrial rifts by Xexoxial Endarchy,[14] the network includes an unfathomable lot of talents and heroes, pivots and commentators, groups and groupies. Mail art never has too many cooks or pilots; few have hopped aboard just for the ride. And instead of fame for fifteen minutes once, mail artists get linked-up, listed, even legendary whenever properly posted.

I contend that anything a postal carrier delivers is arguably mail art, junk mail at least as intriguing as slapdash, no-frills cards soliciting contributions for exhibition. I also suggest that anything a postal carrier delivers that elicits recognition of like-tuned aesthetic wavelength—that fires-up gregariousness-of-kind hormone for happy or cranky creative binge — is *definitely* mail art. If it arrives tattooed by middlemen, spindled, in a pre-printed plastic sheath that explains how 37 billion other items are spared this sort of damage daily...all the better. Mail art is mail that isn't like regular mail or regular art. Mail art is multi-layered without academic joust, without celebrity politics, without wine and cheese reception, without most artworld baggage of studied angst and career-conscious pithiness.

Over the years, I've experienced periodic deluges of correspondence art, prompted by a show somewhere or an article in a campus (or even more mainstream) publication about us-wacky-everybody-nude-up-neo-Dada-artheads-who'll-send-ya-offbeat-free-stuff-if-you-use-a-weird-name. And while I've never taken a sabbatical or even a weekend off from the activity, I have had occasional slowdowns and dry spells from which I just knocked out cheap-copy blab to maintain my presence. Some folks' slowdowns become permanent fade-outs and others burnout after unthinkably prolific immersions, but I've always been consistently if not brilliantly active, easily in control of the extent and frequency of my output. During my now-tenured span (1972–1994),[15] I've noticed two conspicuous developments about which I harbor serio-comedic misgivings:

1. *An increase in mail-anchored smallpress issues that shift from being free or for-swap to bearing prices and subscription rates.* However justified by whine, reason or even an economic sophistication necessary for the continuance of a certain project/magazine, pricetagging mail art above postal tariff sours the flavor, changes the exchange, even "juries" certain input as bearing insufficiently apparent value/cost for trade. I say that folks haunted by bottom-line thinking or vocabulary should shy away from mail art. Those seeking more than break-even mail art involvement (a "sensible-shoes" disposition from alien worlds), those seeking profit, should try their hand in the traditional art world because, however rare the rewards for the struggles therein, it is, compared to mail art, the world of commercial art. I await the day address lists from mail show catalogs are sold to marketers as "guaranteed mail-biased consumers of paper products, rare stamps and collectible prints." Hey, I don't "buy" the starving artist plight or right at all; we should have riches and the franking privilege too; but in the mail, the world bank's backed by the precious meddles of ideas.

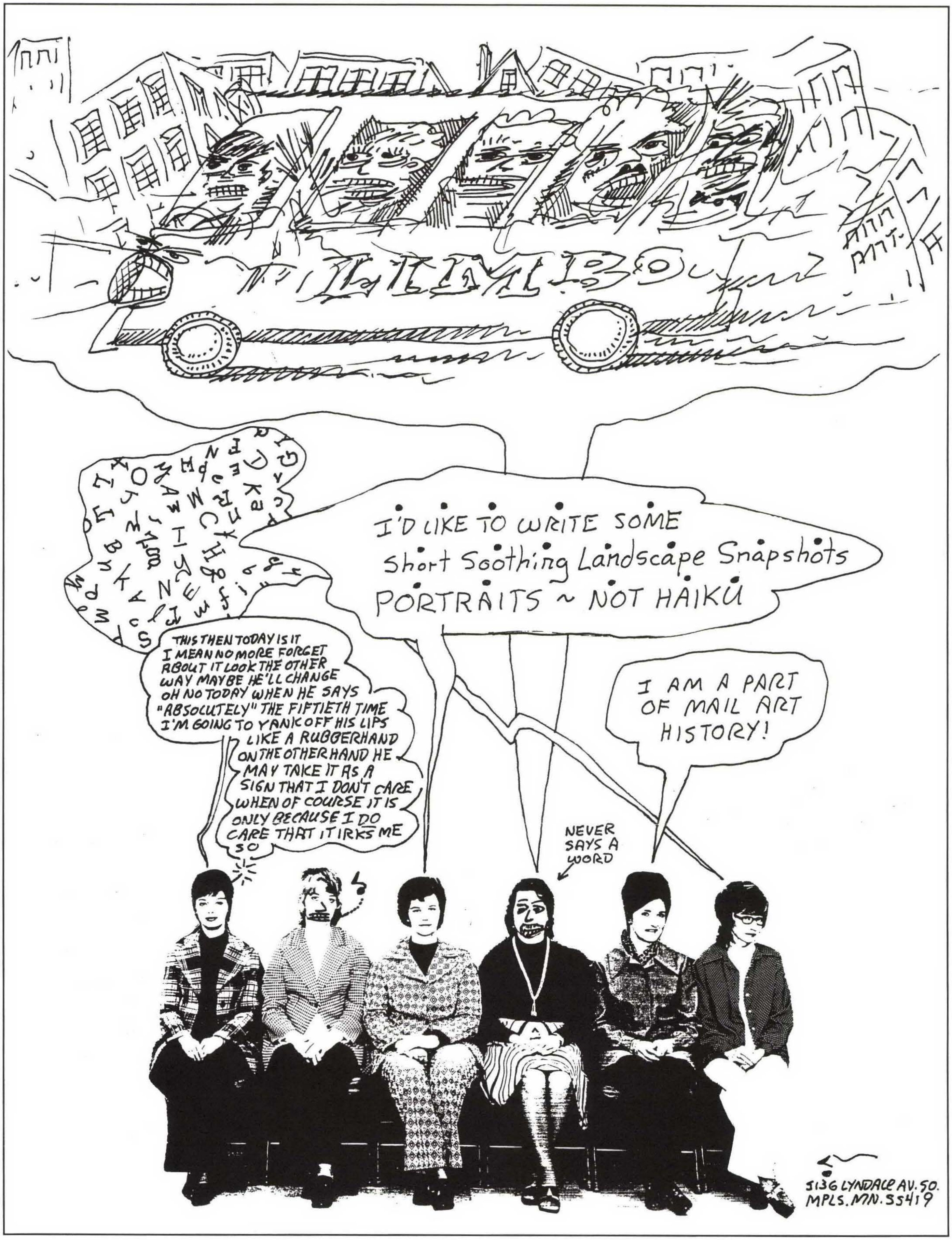


Figure 25. Musicmaster, *Limbo Bus*, U.S.A. 1990, Mail Art Add–On.

2. *The legitimizing of mail art.* There's a glaring increase in the number of efforts to track down, reel in, sort/code/carbon-date and suit and tie the network (Fig. 25). An inevitable raspberry to all of us artsier-than-thous, the legitimization is fueled, in ironic break from typical mail shenanigans, because of and not in spite of deliberate projects by participants. Taken singly, such endeavors are engagingly introspective tour de forceps, hardly unhealthy. But taken as a trend, they strike me as threats to the mail environment.

Having aired those grievances, the reactionary complaints of mail fogeydom, I want to build up to a pyrotechnical finale of plugs, slugs and affirmations. In spite of all the Death of Mail Art shows that tick away each year, mail art is alive and well. Ranks of the undead may swell, but so do the ranks of the living. Mail art is a way to grind an ax, bury a hatchet, be sinner and saint both. I brag about my unwavering devotion to such unthinkable democracy.

Mail art is disjointed, cocksure, shameful, rough, threatening! It's agitprop envelope declaring ART STRIKE. It's prolific mail-werewolf Michael VooDoo explaining "I make (mail art) as a means of easing the guilt I feel for being a monster in a monstrous world."[16] It is Fluxus underscored, underpaid, seriously playful. It's Draconian political sweep calling ART STRIKE. Mail art is scurrilous, perilous, crucial, corny, double-jointed! It's the economical clarity of a Richard C. autobiographical postcard. It's a bristling poetic shard from class cut-up John Bennett. Mail art is getting a sheet of ruled paper filled with SirQ's pencilled penance—"I am not an artist." It's responding to an invitation to send something for a plagiarism show (there are lots of 'em) with an identical invitation to *your* plagiarism show.

Mail art is hopelessly romantic, pointlessly violent, securely obscure, possibly lost forever in postal web, politically naive! It's a document from warp-zone bureaucracy of the Kingdom of Edelweiss,[17] a brilliantly painted pop collage by J.K. Poste, a garishly dressed envelope from Rudi Rubberoid.

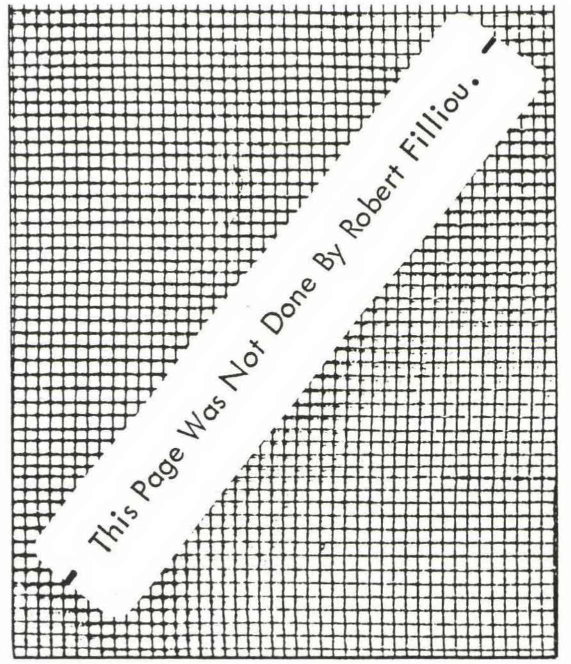


Figure 26. Uncle Don Milliken, *This Page Was Not Done by Robert Filliou*, U.S.A., 1977. Page from *This is Not A Fluxist Book*, OR Little Book No. 1. Courtesy of Musicmaster Mail Art Archive.

Mail art is onanistic anarchy moaning ART STRIKE. It's ceramic urban-deathmask from tough-guy rancher ("Hey!—Moo when you're told to moo!") Fucci.[18] It's the art world's bigger picture without dubious benefit of fame or frame.

Mail art is Right Now art and recession-proof! It is this book's pages unbinding, getting painted and mailed to ensure historical accuracy. It's irrepressible gossip and goad. It's Rube Goldberg's way to heaven. Sometimes unconditional, sometimes drenched with nonverbal rules and expectations, mail art is *always impermanent* (!), out-of-body adrenaline, it's stuff from Hungary, Estonia, Japan, New Jersey and Dadaland! Mail art is a curmudgeonly rant in Uncle Don's (Fig. 26) ORworks.[19] It's insipid bow towards more insipid prattle for an ART STRIKE. I swear it's occasionally like getting a missive from Mars.

Mail art is uncommon-denominatored unity among the disenfranchised (and their franchisees), isolated and oblique. It's exclamation points without punctuation! *LISTEN TO ME*—put your ear to this book and listen—mail art is a

spectacular game in which we're all referees and most valuable players and it can't be deboned and reconstituted into an aerosol-applied snack history. It's you (and please don't think this is an "I'm okay, you're okay" refrain when we all know how unmail-art-like *that* is). It's me. It's us exchanging art without kibitzing mentors, reps, critics. It's the next unwritten paragraph and the postage on my brow.

* * * * * *

1. Greet-O-Matic is Minnesotan collagist Jack Kronebusch, who also published *Study Hard* (1983), a xerox-of-a-xerox-etcetera degeneration of an image of a student into dot-dash smithereens. England's Pauline Smith issued eerie tributes to a man who was, through no fault or function of the artist, a major figure in history. Please note that I don't think the players I unmask herein will care, as their identities are easily found or commonly known.

2. Tarzana, aka DKA Productions, is Darlene Altschul, rubber stamp and blockprint artist extraordinaire. GeORge (George Brett) is now, I think, a nORth Carolinian. Claudine Barbot, along with artists Gerard and Fernand, are on Avenue Y, Brooklyn, New York.

3. Frank Ferguson, aka SirQ/Sir Quaxalot, conceptualized his Academy in the early '70s. Lowell Darling, a.k.a Dudley Finds, issued art degrees and mail art of the Dear So&So variety with an absurdest spin, from his Fat City School in Hollywood throughout the '70s; he documented his 1978 bid for governor in his mail-gone-human diary *One Hand Shaking*. The Western Dakota Junk Company was the creation of collagist Peter Whitson Warren, who, in 1969, selected the term SLUJ (Selected Lovable Unique Junk) to umbrella things found or selected (ala Duchamp) as artfully redefined. Ray Johnson re-invented the postage stamp in 1958.

4. Studs Terkel-like interviewer David Greenberger, publisher of the poignant and perverse magazine *The Duplex Planet.*

5. One of the most prolific and most gleefully-demented writer/artist/ pranksters alive, Al "Blaster" Ackerman effortlessly knocks out dazzling stuff around the clock; a family tree of his pen names, institutions and chorale members would require several chapters. Without knowing it, you might be corresponding with him.

6. Good examples of this grouping are endless and include the more sustenance-minded or by-subscription publications like *FILE, VILE, Panache, Strange Faeces, El Djarida, American Living, Rubberstampmadness, Umbrella, Lightworks*, and so many influential others. But I especially wish to acknowledge the smaller, odder, mail-created items like Tom Hosier's *Modern Correspondence*; Steve Hitchcock's *Cabaret Voltaire*; the calendars/comics/newsletters of the SubWaxin Haddock's Art Maggots, *Psychopedia*; *Light Times*; the publications of flyer-posting activists Cerebral Discourse; Blaster Al Ackerman's *Unknown Worlds* and *Laughing Postman* and *Birk Neark*; Richard Meade's *Data File* series; *1/2 Life Network* and *Laughing Whale* (two of many *Assembling*-style periodicals), my own *Musical Comedy Editions*, and Michael Hyatt's *1984 Calendar of Olympic Gamers, Music & Orwellian Dates.*

7. From Maria Meins, a.k.a Jazzmin the Heavy.

8. From Windham Hill recording artist William Oskay, who smashed the instrument at the 4th Annual Dada Spectacular, which I staged and hosted in Portland, Oregon in 1974.

9. By aforementioned Pauline Smith.

10. Nunzio is painter/musician James Cobb of San Antonio. Lloyd Dunn, who puts out *PhotoStatic* (currently in Art Strike remission) and *Yawn* from the Iowan underground, is a member of and publicist for the Tape Beatles.

11. Ben Vauter's delightful "Postman's Choice" card, addressed differently on otherwise identical obverse/reverse; perforated artists' stamps of every description; 1990 "Make My Day" exhibition to benefit Casper, Wyoming's American Postal Worker's Union; official-looking rubber-stamped information, satiric to incendiary; endless add-to-and-return and add-to-and-send-elsewhere collagings; rounds of poker via mail; exquisite corpses by mail; law-bending "Fuck the Post Office" challenges; Ron Illardo's envelope-covering Dear Postman letters which identify addressees somewhere within the rambling, folksy prose; et cetera.

12. Thousands of mail art shows have collectively covered and uncovered, honored and ignored nearly every theme and topic: Oleg Yudin's and FaGaGaGa's "Detective" (USSR/USA, 1991); Cees Francke's (a.k.a SPUZ) mid–'70s "International Armpit Shows" (Holland and USA); Mr Fabulous's "Greetings From..." (USA, 1984); Clemente Padin's "Africa: Colonialism & Liberation" (Uruguay, 1990); Terry Reid's "Inch Art" (New Zealand, 1974); M.L. McCorkle's "Your Heart's Desire" (USA, 1978); Ko de Jonge's "Door-Art" (Holland, 1976); R. Mutt's "Great California Drought" (USA, 1977); Jenny Soup's "Soup" (USA, 1988); and so on (world-wide, year after year).

13. This guesstimate is bandied about without any statistical ballast I'm aware of, but it has an appealing heft and clout.

14. Musicians, performance/Happening artists Liz Was and Miekal And once sponsored a spectacular, annual, avant-garde gala, "Festival of the Swamps," from their former homebase, Madison, Wisconsin. Xexoxial Endarchy, Ltd. is the non-profit organization which umbrellas, among many experimental and networking activities, a line of publications which includes titles by Jake Berry, Lloyd Dunn, Lon Spiegelman, Bern Porter and other maildom luminaries. Their magazine "Xexolage" has showcased the doings of macabre, blasphemailist Michael VooDoo, neo-pop vivisectionist Malok, and concrete poet Scott Helmes. Not mail artists per se, Was and And are nonetheless so lousy with money matters and so hyper/manic/ fever-pitched for common good of new and peripheral art, they're a key accessory.

15. I formally latched into mail art while visiting Lynne Gurewitz at California College of Arts and Crafts in 1972, when/where I attended a workshop by Dana Atchley (a.k.a Ace Space Company). Atchley was on an endless prowl of America's artistic underbelly, and part of his "space van's" traveling props was a "space trunk" which contained

artworks by and documents about some of the most extraordinary, unusual and mostly uncelebrated artists in America. I felt like I was sifting through a treasure; I examined booklets and objects carefully, stuff by Dr. Brute, Futzie Nutzle, Irene Dogmatic, Mr. Peanut, Thomas Ockerse and TruthCo; I took down addresses and never sent mail dispassionately again. When I returned to Mt. Angel College, Mt. Angel, Oregon, head aspin and hands on fire, I began my mail art career (which, of course, is the true history of mail art). Painter Jon Masterson and Jack Eyerly (Portland's one-man E.A.T.—Experiments in Art & Technology—Network) encouraged me with leads to the Image Bank, John Dowd, *FILE Magazine* and others. I assumed the alter-ego SpaceAngel to underscore my fascination with nontraditional poetries and, no doubt, as tip of the palette to Dana (who I later booked/promoted in Portland). I switched my alter-ego to Musicmaster in the mid-'70s during melodramatic catharsis spawned by love lost and love regained.

16. *Xerolage* number 2, Xexoxial Endarchy, WI.

17. Tucked in the mindscape of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, this proud monarchy issues bonds, notgeld-like currency, first-day covers and news bulletins.

18. Dominick Fucci lives out-past the boondocks of Prineville, Oregon and prolifically issues surreal pen and ink depictions of man versus man, man versus livestock, man versus Fucci. Though he rarely produces mutations of popular 1950s ceramics any more, or his legendary stained-glass erotica, his output is as happily tormented and exo-Catholic as ever.

19. Uncle Don Milliken's *OR* magazine is one of maildom's few long-playing publications (over 130 issues by the close of 1990). It is a relentlessly artful anti-art series of neatly-assembled, differently-formatted collections of complaints, points, and noisy meditations.

* * * * * *



Figure 27. M. Devoni, *Canadada*, Canada, 1988. Image taken from the pages of Devoni's zine *The Soo Thing*.

CHAPTER 5
THE VIEW FROM CANADADA 1968–1972

Ed Varney

The other day a friend asked me about mail art. He said, "You were one of the guys who started it, weren't you?" and I had to set him straight — nobody started it, was like a consciousness thing, it happened simultaneously all over the place at the same time. So I've been trying to think back to when I first got involved and how. It was about 1968. I was into concrete poetry, I was always interested in poetry, and one of the things poets do is send their work to other poets and editors of small mags (I was also an editor) who occasionally publish the stuff and who correspond with each other: what they're doing, what poetry means for them, etc.

Concrete poetry is—or was, you don't hear the term much these days—visual poetry, turned inside out so the typography and presentation reflects and amplifies what is being said. It's very graphic. And it easily spanned international borders. Looking back at publications from those days I see names like Ken Friedman, Emmett Williams, and Yoko Ono from the U.S., Edgardo Antonio Vigo from Argentina, Julien Blaine from France, David Harris from Canada, Jochen Gerz from Germany, and John Furnival from England, among others. It was natural to correspond with these poets/artists. There were also exhibitions of concrete poetry, one in 1969 at the FIne Arts Gallery at the University of British Columbia organized by Alvin Balkind, with a significant number of Ray Johnson's collages, and one at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1970.

I had moved to Vancouver in 1968 and almost immediately became connected with Intermedia Society, a loose-knit collaborative group of artists, poets and technologists who were using anything they could get their hands on in the way of technology to explore the possibilities that new media and the fusion of the two metaphors—art and technology—had to offer. One of these technologies was the printing press. Intermedia acquired a sophisticated, for its time, Roneo mimeograph machine with a primitive four-color scanner. This made a lot of things possible. It was about this time as well that the storefront quick printer and Letraset first came into existence, both of which opened up new possibilities. I had done printmaking in the past, etching, stone lithos, woodcuts and some graphic art, as well as producing literary magazines. I began to produce small editions, 250 to 300, of books of graphic poetry with images. Some I sold in stores and some I began to trade with other concrete poets through the mail.

In 1970, with a couple of friends, I began to produce a small almost-weekly poetry magazine called the *Poem Company*. We reproduced everything just the way it came to us—no typesetting. Right from the beginning, we decided not to rely on subscriptions but to mail it out to whomever we wanted; we would choose our audience rather than having it choose us. I think this is an important working method that has continually determined my network activity. We would add to the mailing list at will and drop those who failed to respond after a number of mailings. Postage was six cents, the quick printer would print 400 copies for about $8.00, so we could mail out 250 copies for a total of just over $20.00 which came out of our pockets. The *Poem Company* made lots of friends and really started to get the mail flowing.

Around that time, I think it was 1970, Ken Friedman came to Vancouver and set up his office/archive/museum,

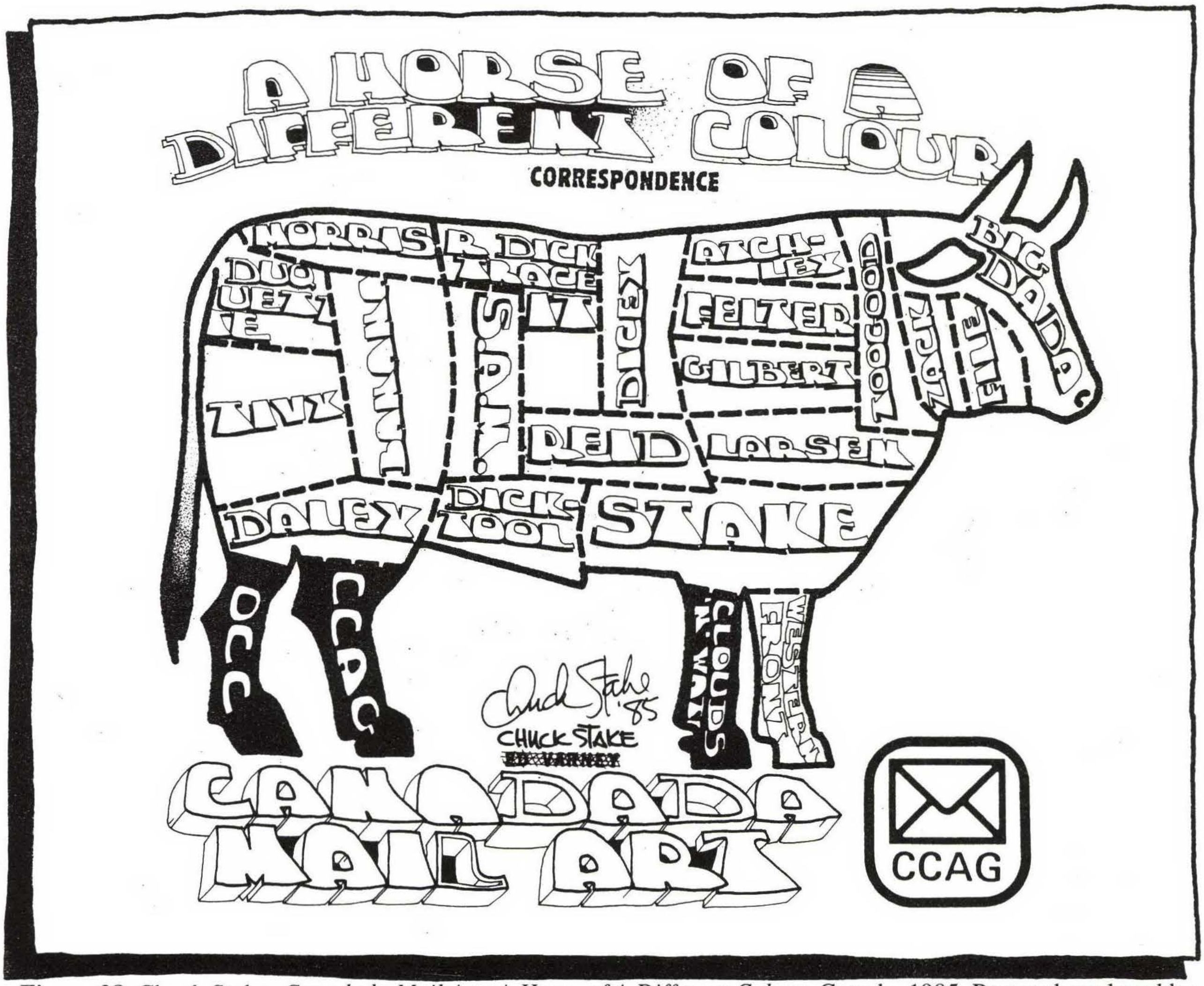


Figure 28. Chuck Stake, *Canadada Mail Art: A Horse of A Different Colour*, Canada, 1985. Postcard produced by The Canadian Correspondence Art Gallery, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

which spilled out of a suitcase, in the Vancouver Art Gallery for a few days—a performance piece. His ideas, his experiences and his Fluxus connections were very interesting to the Intermedia artists, particularly myself and the Image Bankers. He was also a prolific correspondent. 1970 is also the year I first got connected to the New York Correspondence School, which held a large and seminal exhibition at the Whitney Museum. In Victoria, Dana Atchley put together the *Ace Space Atlas* which was a sort of assembling project where each person sent in 250 copies of their work he collated, bound, and distributed it in a binder to the participants. Looking through the list of contributors I see Richard C., Ken Friedman, Ray Johnson, Richard Kostelanetz, Ant Farm, and Davi det Hompson from the U.S., Michael Morris, Gary Lee Nova, Glenn Lewis, Eric Metcalfe, General Idea and myself from Canada, Clemente Padin from Uruguay, and Terry Reid (originally from Vancouver) from Japan and later Australia, all of whom continued to participate in the process of mail art.

1971 also saw the Image Bank Postcard Show at the Fine Arts Gallery at UBC. Image Bank was the creation of Michael Morris and Gary Lee Nova, two young Vancouver artists who had both studied in England and who had been part of the Intermedia collective. The postcard show exhibited both commercial postcards, such as the Statue of Liberty, and postcards sent through the mail by artists—



Figure 29. May Wilson, 1972, Canada, postcard from the *Image Bank Post Card Show*, an exhibition organized in 1971 by Western Front, Vancouver, B.C. The edited set of postcards was published by Coach House Press, Toronto.

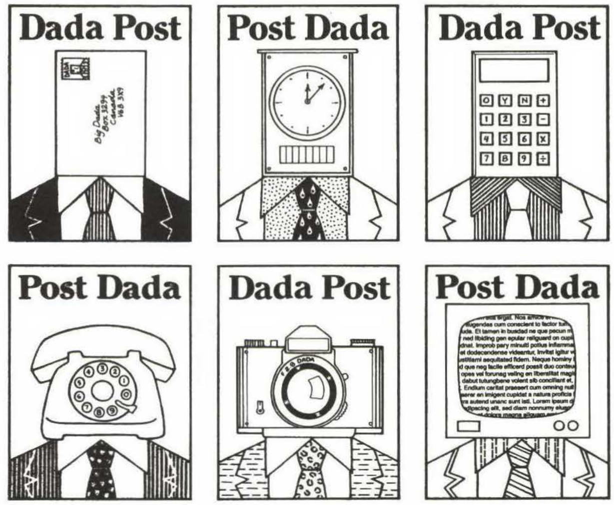


Figure 30. (Above) Ed Varney, *Dada Post*, Canada. 1985. Postcard.

Figure 31. (Below) *Dr. Brute's Saxes from the Anthropomorphiks Event in Art City*, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1972. Appearing left to right: Mr. Peanut, a.k.a. Vincent Trasov; Dr. Brute, a.k.a. Eric Metcalfe; Kan-d-man, a.k.a. Robert Fones; Art Rat, a.k.a. Gary Lee-Nova. Photographer, Taki Blues Singer. Photo courtesy of Fluxus Collection, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.



altered postcards, handmade postcards, etc. The catalogue was a box of postcards created by the show participants and printed by Coach House Press in Toronto. There are cards by May Wilson, (Fig. 29) Jochen Gerz, Dana Atchley, General Idea, Geoff Hendricks, Ant Farm, Eric Metcalfe (Dr. Brute), Gary Lee Nova (Art Rat), Michael Morris (Marcel Dot), Vincent Trasov (Mr. Peanut, Fig. 31), David Harris (David Uu), Lowell Darling, Stu Horn (The Northwest Mounted Valise), Glenn Lewis (Flakey Rosehips) and Gerry Gilbert (Slim Flowers), among others, all of whom continued to be active mail artists and correspondents for a while.

In 1971, Anna Banana, in her role as Town Fool of Victoria, began publishing the *Banana Rag*. In it, she

requested banana images and information. Quickly, Anna Banana was deluged with material she later algamated into the *Encyclopedia Bananica.* Through the *Banana Rag*, she began corresponding with the Image Bankers and connected with the network.

Up to this point, Vancouver had hogged all the mail art activity in Canada. In 1972 the folks at General Idea in Toronto put out *FILE Magazine,* a sort of parody on *LIFE.* I have found a copy of No. 2 from May/June 1972 which contains an Image Bank Request list. In it, for instance, Ed Plunkett from New York asks for vamp, vaudeville, and modes of locomotion material. Ray Johnson asks for Shirley Temple dolls and information, and Don Mabie (Chuck Stake) (Fig. 28) requests a copy of "American Pie" by Don McLean. 1972 also saw the publication of the Image Bank International Image Exchange Directory by Talon Books here in Vancouver. It was seminal in that it contained the names and addresses of all the known practitioners who had participated in the concrete poetry movement, the New York Correspondence School, *FILE Magazine*, *The Poem Company*, and the Image Bank mailing list. It opened the door to international correspondence and exchange rather than what had been up to that time mostly a North American movement.

I started out as an existentialist. In the early 1960s, the world looked bleak and absurd, nothing made any sense and I was overcome with hopelessness and unable to act. I read Camus and Sartre and Heidegger and Husserl and Kierkegaard and I wrote poems. Then I discovered Zen. The world still looked bleak and meaningless, but from close up, there were lots of details to attend to. If you lived long enough you might get old. There was nothing to get upset about. Perhaps that's why the collaborative working method of Intermedia appealed to me; individual ego seemed less important than the collective process.



Figure 32. ManWoman, *Mr. Death*, 1990, Canada. Postcard from mail artist ManWoman's February 1990 exhibition at the Smash Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.

About 1970 I discovered Dada (Fig. 30). The world still looked absurd, but that fact in itself had become something to laugh about. I didn't know much about historical dada, but its emphasis on aggressive irreverence, on the active intervention of art in life, and the sense that the absurd workings of the universe could be turned into an endless joke all appealed to my sensibility. The constant retelling of that joke became, for me, a motive for serious communication. Other artists were the most interesting people to communicate with, they were frank about what they liked and didn't like, their response was direct and explicit, their ideas were provocative and controversial and they understood the nature of the network immediately. The mail was an exciting personal medium, but it was also easy for others to eavesdrop and overhear what was going

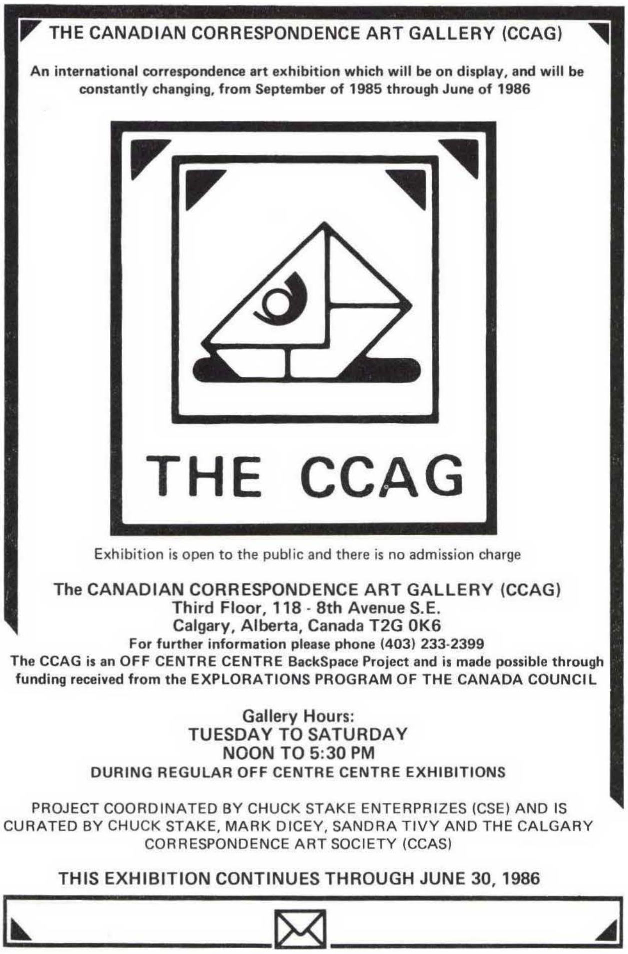


Figure 33. Chuck Stake, *The Canadian Correspondence Art Gallery*, 1985. Postcard. Mail art show invitation.

on. Differences of opinion could be aired, but basically among friends. Ideas and images could be shared, traded, and reacted to without waiting for the fickle and lengthy process of publishing. And friends were made, travelers met people they had corresponded with for years, events and shows were set up, the network expanded and contracted. Mail art and the connections I've made through the network have been a major inspiration for me, it has enriched my life and my work. That's the bottom line for me.

After 1972 there were many Canadian mail artists who came along. In Vancouver James Felter and Adrienne Saunders produced a whole series of mailings under the name of Five/Cinq Aesthetics. Felter organized the first exhibition of artistamps, recognizing them as a separate medium in 1973 at the Simon Fraser University Gallery. Gerald Juppiter-Larsen, Greg Zbitnew, John Atkin, Steven Sky, and Kevin Godsoe have all been active mail artists. Don Mabie in Calgary has been a consistent mailer and producer since the very early 1970s. As director of Clouds 'n' Water Gallery, which mutated into Off Centre Centre and the Canadian Correspondence Art Gallery, (Fig. 33) he produced shows and events which made Calgary an important center for mail art. Mark Dicey (who masquerades as 2,000 Cattle), Sandra Tivy and Nelson Hendricks, all from Calgary, have been important producers. David Zack from Saskatchewan was also active in the early 1970s. In the late 1970s, The People's Republic of Poetry from Coburg, Ontario and Mike Duquette from Toronto were early, prolific mailers.

Most of these people continued to exchange art and information in the mail, dipping into and extricating themselves from the network at different times. A substantial number of other Canadian artists also became involved in mail art activities after 1972. I'm sure I've left out many names, but this isn't intended to be a history of Canadian Mail Art—it's a look back at the early days of mail art, the view from Canadada.

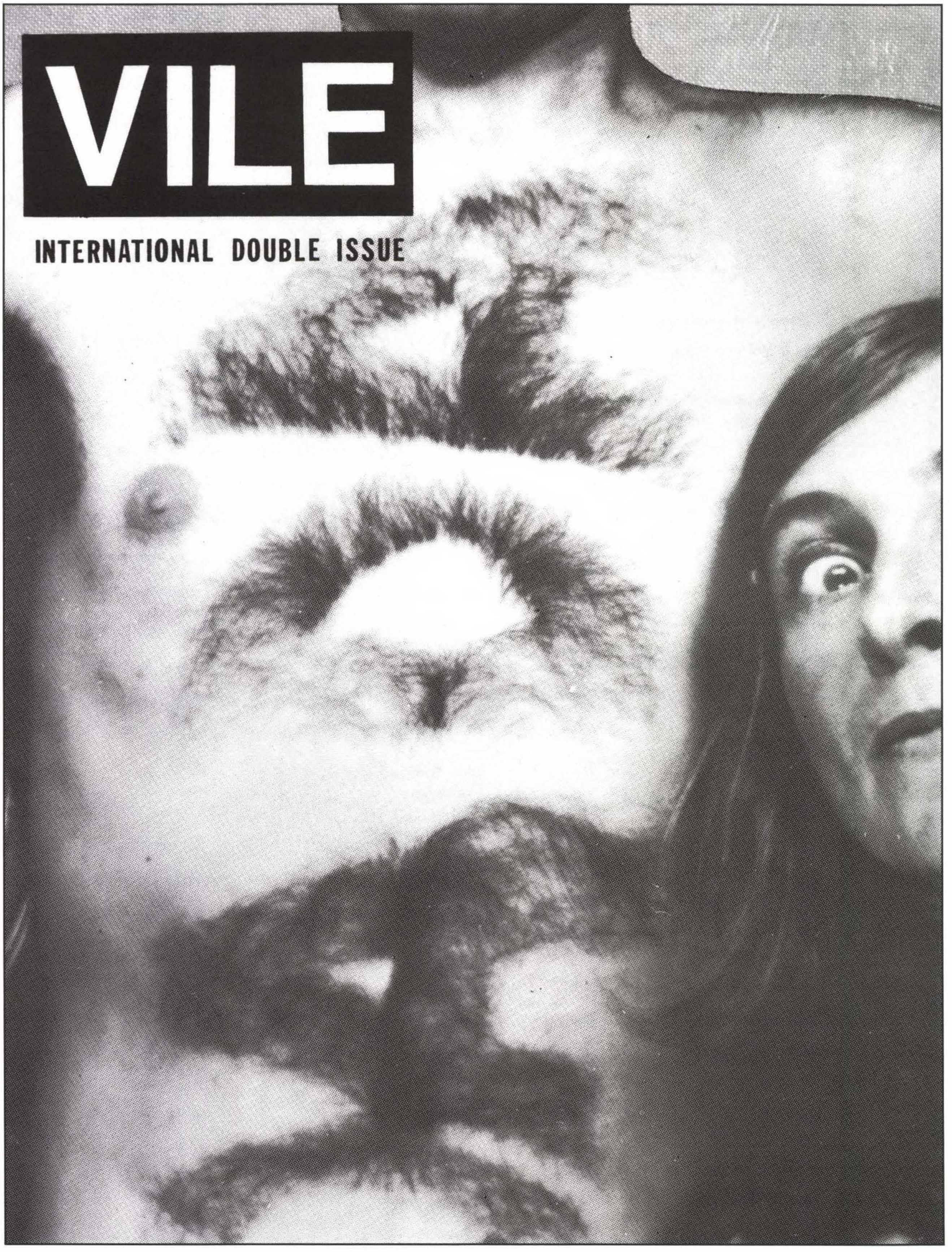


Figure 34. Bill Gaglione, *VILE,* International Double Issue, U.S.A. 1976. Cover design of Bill Gaglione's Dada shave with a wide-eyed Anna Banana.

CHAPTER 6

VILE HISTORY

Anna Banana

VILE was inspired by *FILE* magazine's growing disdain for mail-art. It began at Speedprint, a small instant-print shop in San Francisco where it became apparent to me that anyone could be a publisher. In 1973, letters by Robert Cumming and Hudson of Ant Farm voiced *FILE's* viewpoint: that mail-art is a plague on art and ought to be wiped out immediately. As an ardent "mail-arter," I disagreed, and so began work on the first issue of *VILE* which appeared in February 1974 as a new forum for mail-art.

I would be omitting an obvious point in the discussion of mail-art if I didn't acknowledge the very uneven aesthetics of works exchanged via this network. The first group of artists who began mailing the late '60s and early '70s withdrew from the network by 1975. They didn't like the aesthetics of the works they began receiving once their names, addresses and image requests were published in *FILE*. They labelled the work of newcomers "junk mail" and "quick-kopy krap." I stayed involved because, in spite of this reality, I believe that the process of communication and exchange is important, regardless of the aesthetics and skills of the sender. Secondly, I was getting a lot more "gems" than I was xerox multiples.

For *VILE*, I visualized a magazine that would look like *LIFE* but on close examination would reveal its true nature: subtle put-downs of the mass culture with nasty, Dada, "up yours" type messages. However, it didn't take any close examination of the first couple of issues to see that they looked nothing like *LIFE* beyond their covers. The material I received in response to my first invitation did not lend itself to presentation in the imagined format. It was all full-page artwork: collages, drawings, and writings. I published the material received, presenting it in a wrap-around cover over the vello bound pages. The red-and-black cover featured a photo of Monty Cazazza made up to look as though he had just torn his heart out.[1] (Fig. 35)

When *VILE* 1 No. 1 was published in San Francisco (1974), some of the artists originally involved in mailing art were still active, so the issue has works by David Mayor/Fluxus, Alan Bealy, Dana Atchley/Spaceco, Davi Det Hompson, Felipe Ehrenberg/Beau Geste Press, Genesis P.

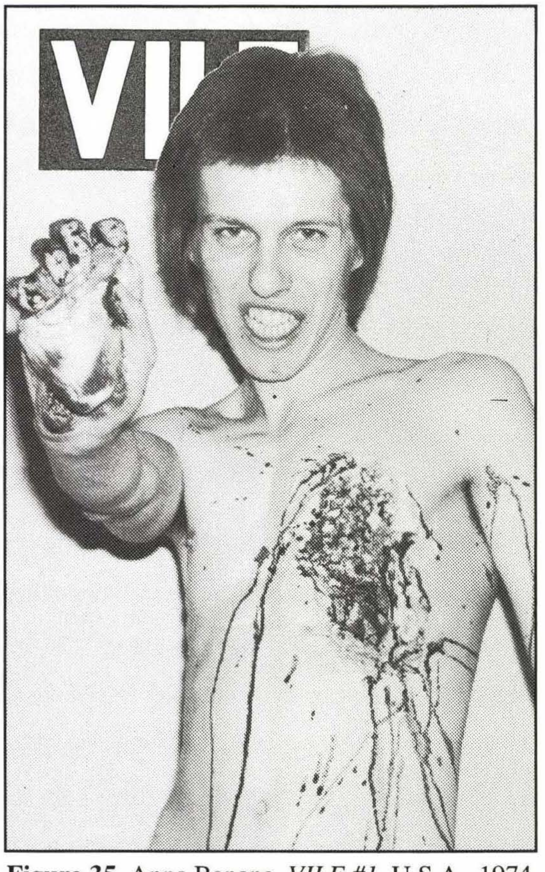


Figure 35. Anna Banana, *VILE #1*, U.S.A., 1974. Cover photograph of mail artist Monty Cazazza.

Orridge/Throbbing Gristle and Marcel Idea/Image Bank, along with many others who are still active in mail-art but are unknown outside that network.

In spite of the condemnations of mail-art by Cumming and Hudson in *FILE*'s Volume 2, No. 3, September 1973 issue, *FILE*[2] continued to list artists' addresses and image requests through its Fall 1975 issue. This popularized the activity, and hundreds of newcomers began mailing. The "old guard," swamped with xerox and quick-copy collages, quit mailing to the "network," and the ever-expanding numbers of newcomers took it over.

That's where *VILE* took over from *FILE*, except for the fact that *VILE* never had the circulation that *FILE* did. *FILE* was a newsprint edition with glossy cover, running 3,000 to 5,000 copies and gaining newsstand distribution through quantity and regularity. On the other hand, there were only 200 copies printed of *VILE's* first and second edition, distributed almost exclusively through the network. After that, *VILE* was printed in editions of 1,000, but again distribution was through the network and mail-order promotions to universities and art libraries. As a result, *VILE* had little impact outside its own community, while *FILE* moved in more mainstream channels.

I published the second issue of *VILE* in September 1974, in time to meet a CCLM (Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines) grant deadline, and received a grant towards the publication of the third issue. The cover photo by Jimmy de Sana on the second issue is of a naked man with an erection, hanging by the neck in a doorway. Inside the front and back covers I repeated from *VILE* 1 a pattern of women's fetish shoes, and this repeat shoe theme became a constant element in all issues. While the first issue was vello-bound with a wrap around cover, this second issue, the slimmest of them all, was simply stapled.

VILE 2 still contained a number of artists I refer to in my article written for Michael Crane's book *Correspondence Art*[3] as the "first wave" of mail art, artists such as Ken Friedman, William Farley, Lowell Darling, Ray Johnson, and Gary Lee Nova. Lee Nova told me in an interview in 1981 that he continues to exchange "quality goods" with a number of artists by mail, but is no longer interested in or involved with the mail-art network.

It was with the third issue that I started getting closer to my original idea of what *VILE* would be. While it still had thirty-seven pages of mail-art reproduced in the form it arrived, the first twenty-eight pages were laid-out in a reduced form (8 1/2" x 11"), but *LIFE*-like format. I utilized ad art from early *LIFE* magazines and presented poetry in the place of ad copy, along with fiction, letters and photos. A thousand copies were printed from metal plates, an improvement over the instant print (paper plates) of the first two. It was saddle-stitched with a glossy two color cover depicting "Guru Swami Salami revealing the source of his wisdom"—psychiatrist Richard Miller parting the bum-flap of his wife Kathleen de Wilbur's long johns and showing the crack of her ass (Fig. 36).

While mail-art and *VILE* were always international, with this third issue, (numbered Volume 3, No. 1, Dec. '75) I made a more concerted effort to feature artists living outside North America. So the issue reproduces work by Robin Crozier, Pauline Smith, Michael Scott, Genesis P. Orridge of England, Klaus Groh and Werner Kalkmann of Germany, De Ossorno of Spain, Raul Marroquin of Holland, Clemente Padin, Uruguay, Terry Reid, Australia, Arturo Schwarz, Italy, Daniel Spoerri, France, etc.

Also reproduced in this issue were photos and notes on some of the local events and performances Bill Gaglione



Figure 36. Anna Banana, *VILE Cover,* Vol. 3, No. 1, Canada, 1975.

and I were producing. These included the 1974 Bay Area Dadaist's annual group photo, Banana and Dogmatic street performances, the Gaglione/Rossman production of Tristan Tzara's "Gas Heart" and "DADA meets Surrealism" with Gaglione, Mancusi, Arturo Schwartz and Daniel Spoerri at the San Francisco Art Institute. It was beginning to reflect the work I was most excited about.

After editing and producing the first three issues of *VILE*, I alternated with Bill Gaglione in the editorial chair, but I continued to do a lot of the production work, fund raising, and writing (Fig. 34). With Number 4, the "Double International Issue" (numbered 2/3), the first edition edited and produced by Gaglione, *VILE* reached some new highs, namely one hundred pages, perfect binding, and a directory with addresses of the artists whose works it reproduced. The cover is a blow-up of a photo-booth shot of Bill with the second DADA shave on his chest, and me while the back cover has photos of both shaves (positive and negative), which I executed about a year apart.

The other major difference between this and earlier issues was Gaglione's exclusive, mail-art focus. Eliminating the fiction and poetry gave the issue a more spacious, graphic appearance and feeling. I contributed a few letters from my files from Arturo Schwarz, Bino Sanminiatelli, Zabala, Robert Fones, and Kate Graig, but my major contribution was the introduction which was written after Bill had put the issue together.

With the fifth issue (Summer '77, Volume 3, No. 2), I finally satisfied my notions of a successful parody of *LIFE* magazine. In the table of contents works were listed under the following categories: Art News, Art Performances, Art Events, Art Feature Stories, Art Works, Poetry, Fiction and Short Writings, Letters and Photographs. These works represented over one hundred artists and thirty writers. Sixty-eight pages were laid out magazine-style with type, ad art and photos. The mail-art works, such as postcards, collages, and drawings, completed the final thirty pages.

The issue was more of a showplace for the documentation of events and performances than art work. I kept up with the poetry and fiction more for the "texture" it gave to the issue than any heavy commitment to those media, although I do enjoy the mix of literary and visual expression. And there was the CCLM to keep in mind, since they came up with grant funds for *VILE* on three occasions. They were most interested in the literary content. I don't think we would have received the funding we did from them if all the issues had Gaglione's mail-art focus.

Number 6, "Fe-Mail-Art," one of the most popular issues, edited by Gaglione, was the first to break with the *LIFE*-like logo. We had seen *FILE* do battle with *LIFE* over



Figure 37. (Top) Mary Ashley, (Bottom) Rhoda Mappo. Page from Bill Gaglione's edition of *VILE International No. 6: FE-MAIL ART*, U.S.A., 1978.

its logo, and come out having to change theirs. We knew we'd be in the same boat if *LIFE* caught on to us. We decided it was time to experiment with other formats. So, "Fe-Mail-Art" was smaller (7" x 10" rather than the standard 8 1/2" x 11") and Gaglione chose an illustration rather than a photo for the black-and-pink front cover.

"Fe-Mail-Art" is a collection of mail-art works exclusively by women. The contents are broken down into three categories: Postal Art, Postcards, and Correspondence. The Postal Art section is a mixed bag of items ranging from photographs, rubber stamp works, typewriter art, mail-art invites and newsletters on or by women about their activities and/or facilities—works such as "Women in the Printing Arts," "Franklin Furnace," "Baack'scher Kunstraum," "Women Artists' Newsletter and Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics."

As I said in the introduction to the "Fe-Mail-Art," I feel women have embraced mail-art because it is a medium through which it is easy to assert oneself and get a response in kind, regardless of age, sex, etc. It also gives me a sense of community on an international level, fostering the idea that peaceful co-existence, caring and concern for people of other nationalities is possible. The issue reproduced works by over one hundred women from the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, Japan, Brazil, England, France, Holland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Argentina (Fig. 37, 38) including Leavenworth Jackson, Kate Craig, Joyce Cutler Shaw, Carol Law, Ruth Rehfeldt, Yoko Ono, Martha Wilson, Herta, Luch Childs, Beth Anderson, Alison Knowles, Judith Hoffberg, Eleanor Dickenson, and May Wilson, to name a few.

Grant funds of $923.00 came from the CCLM and this paid for an edition of 700 copies. The only printer that would handle such a short run was the non-commercial West Coast Print Center in Berkeley. Because it was a short run it had low priority, and several months passed between our delivering the artwork and their delivering the finished copies.

A week before our September 7, 1978 departure for our three-and-a-half month tour of Europe, the issue was ready. Bill and I had just returned from a couple of weeks in Toronto where we participated in "A Literal Exchange" at A Space. We set to work addressing envelopes, putting together a promotional flyer to accompany the outgoing issue and filling orders. The night before our departure for Europe was spent stuffing envelopes and the last thing we did before heading to the airport was to visit the post office, lick and stick stamps on the 150 envelopes and mail them.

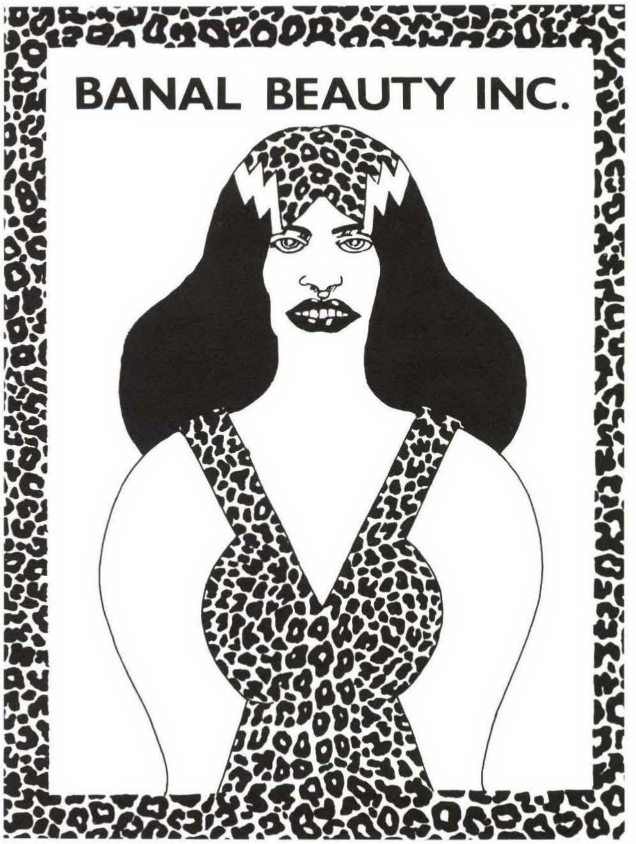


Figure 38. Eric Metcalfe (a.k.a. Dr. Brute), *Banal Beauty Inc.*, Page from Bill Gaglione's edition of*VILE*, International Double Issue.

STAMP ART/VILE 7 departed even more radically than the last from all previous issues. Gaglione, more and more enamored of rubber stamp art, decided to put together an assembling-type issue of *VILE*. For over a year he advertised and sent out mailings inviting participation in the issue. The specifications were for 300 copies of rubber stamp works on a 6" x 9" page. The packages poured in, and by the time the issue was ready for assembly, there were works by 185 artists.

Besides the listing of participating artists, Gaglione put together an extensive bibliography on rubber stamp art, year by year from 1970 through 1979. It consisted of five pages of shows, events and publications, set in six point type.

The sheer bulk of the material was overwhelming and, further, it was taken out of our apartment for two of the processes necessary to its transformation to book form. First, it went to School on the Hill where there was sufficient space to lay out the pages for collation. A couple of dozen artists came by during the course of the day and, working in shifts, completed the job. The boxes of pages were repacked and returned to our apartment. Next, it went to a printing shop where Gaglione worked for the drilling (large scale hole punching) necessary for the Acco fasteners that bind the pages together.

There followed numerous work parties to cut and punch the covers, stamp labels, affix the rubber stamp on each cover, assemble the cover, contents and Acco clasps, then package for mailing. These activities went on for months, and were not finished until our eviction party from our Church Street apartment in September 1980. Two weeks later, we left for our Canadian Tour of "Towards the Future." Since not all contributors sent in the full 300 sheets, the completed edition numbered two hundred and eighty-five. One hundred and eighty-five of these were sent to contributors, leaving about 100 for distribution. These sold quickly and the issue is out of print.

Bill Gaglione continued his romance with rubber stamps with the production of *STAMP ART*, a limited edition periodical created like *VILE 7*, but in an 8 1/2" x 11" format. Contributors were asked to send one hundred and fifty copies of hand-stamped work (no Xerox copies accepted). When he had seventy-five pages, issues were spiral bound and distributed to the contributors with the remaining copies for sale from Abracadada. Today, Gaglione has parlayed his love of rubber stamps into the popular, high-profile business Stamp Francisco. There, his Stamp Art Gallery is the first American gallery to feature international rubber stamp art.

The final *VILE* publication emerged in 1983 as a book, *About Vile,* which contained 106 pages of mail art, postcards, photos, letters and a *LIFE*-like cover format. In addition, the book featured a photo portfolio of my public events, journal excerpts, and photos of the Banana/Gaglione European Tour *Futurist Sound*, Michael Scott's commentary on mail art, and eight pages of works by then-East German artists Robert and Ruth Rehfeldt.

The Great Mail-Art Supply Co. in Greenport, Long Island (NY), hosted the *Anna Banana Answers the Mail* show (1984), and during my two week residency there, I did just that. I bought a suitcase of unanswered mail which I displayed on the gallery walls while I wrote, produced, and mailed an issue of my newsletter, the *Banana Rag*. This was the only way I could find to deal with the volume of mail I'd received. I also produced limited edition artistamps with a Xerox color copier to commemorate my stay in Greenport.

The Greenport residency re-initiated me into the mail art process, and I've been at it ever since, refocusing

Banana Rag on mail art news and issues. Weary of photo-copy collages and invitations that had turned off *FILE* magazine so many years ago, I began publishing *International Art Post (IAP)* in 1988. This full-color periodical of gummed art stamps originally featured work by mail artists, but as *IAP* proceeded and I took stock of production costs, I had to raise prices. After nine issues, only a few mail artists still participate in *IAP*.

Between *IAP* and limited edition *Banana Post* stamp sheets, my focus shifted once again from main-stream mail art to the finite sphere of artist stamps. *The Banana Rag* has been converted to *Artistamp News*, and I am realizing that if I am to continue my involvement in mail art, it has to be with people who share my enthusiasm for the artist stamp. I can't maintain across-the-board contact with mail artists everywhere. After twenty years of mail art activity, my archive is bulging and I don't have room for further expansion. Thus, my decision to limit activities to stamp art and see where that leads. Bananas, of course, are always welcome.

The editor of *Eternal Network* wishes to thank Anna Banana for permission to reprint an updated version of "VILE History" from the original text as it appeared in *About VILE* (1983).

* * * * * *

1. While my reference was Dada, the issue was so "punk" in its aesthetic and editorial stance that both the front cover of No. 1 and the back No. 3 were re-made into posters by British punk bands.
2. *FILE* Magazine, Volume No.1, 2/3 and 4, 1972; Vol. 2 No. 1/2, 3 and 4, 1974, Vol. 2 No. 5, 1974, Vol 3 No. 1, 1975. In Vol. 3 No. 2, Spring 1976, there are no mail-art listings.
3. *Correspondence Art,* by Michael Crane, edited by Mary Stofflet and published by Contemporary Art Press/La Mamelle, PO Box 3123, Rincon Annex, San Francisco, California 94119, Spring 1983.



Figure 39. Michael Bidner, *Artistampex*, Canada, 1984. Poster of the exposition at Forest City Gallery, London, Ontario.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 7

A WORLD OF ARTISTAMPS: REMEMBERING MICHAEL BIDNER

Rosemary Gahlinger-Beaune

Editor's Preface: Postage stamps by philatelic definition are tiny, codified, functional objects with edition sizes, denominations, adhesives, perforations, cancellations, inks, colors, papers, watermarks, and printed images. These philatelic definitives, revenues, and commemorative stamp issues are authorized by governments, not artists. While some aspects of the philatelic definition apply to stamps issued by artists, it is the realm of imagination that governs the unorthodox, ephemeral aesthetic of artistamps created by mail artists.

Canadian philatelist and mail artist Thomas Michael Bidner lived in both worlds of mail art and philately while compiling a monumental sourcebook, *Standard Artistamp Catalogue*. According to American mail artist and philatelist Alex Cheek, Bidner's purpose for the catalogue was "intended to bring mail artists and stamp collectors closer together by recognizing artistamps as philatelic items, worthy of serious study." (Bulletin by Alex Cheek dated June 14, 1989)

Between 1982 and 1984 Bidner invited artists, galleries and fringe art publications to submit stamp art to his *Standard Artistamp Catalogue* project. An overwhelming response came from thousands of artists in over 33 countries. A glimpse into the complex yet informative page layouts that Bidner planned for his enormous catalogue are found in four rare issues (1983) of his *Artistamp Supplement* (See Appendix 5 listing for *Artistamp Supplement*). Bidner hoped these supplements would serve a dual purpose: to generate interest and financial support leading to the eventual publication of his catalogue.

Bidner's *Standard Artistamp Catalogue* project identified the new artists' stamp genre as "artistamps" and the terminology remains today. "Long ago I decided that artistamps were art! And I am going to hold myself to that one as long as possible and let the borderline cases sort themselves out later" (letter to the editor from Michael Bidner dated September 1984). Michael Bidner's collection was bequeathed in entirety to Artpool in Budapest, Hungary.

Although Bidner was an important innovator in the development of artistamps as a new genre, published material about his contributions is rare. The following eulogy by Rosemary Gahlinger-Beaune represents an informative yet intimate look into Michael Bidner's world of artistamps.

Early one April morning in 1981 I heard a knock at the door. There before me, clad in rumpled clothes that looked slept in for years, contrasted by a beautiful hand-embroidered scarf draped ever so carefully over the neck and chest and an armful of colorful packages, stood Michael Bidner. With a mischievous grin and a mixture of innocence and excitement he proclaimed "I've brought you the *MAIL*."

And so it was, time and time again. We'd build a fire, brew up some hot cocoa, divide up the jellybeans by our favorite flavors and sort through the packages like small children opening presents on Christmas day. Junk mail was quickly tossed into the fire delighting us in its' destruction. Then the fun would begin. Ever so slowly, ever so gently we'd pick up one envelope after another and look at its cover. Oh, oh, oh you gotta see this one, it's a real beauty…let me see…we'd say to each other. We would tease each other all morning with the small treasures. Hundreds of carefully drawn images dancing before our eyes. Artistamps outside, sheets of artistamps inside. A world of artistamps!

Thomas Michael Bidner, philatelist, multi-media artist, pioneer of artistamps (a term he coined to replace the awkward usage of artist's stamps and artists' stamps). This was the beginning of his ten-year mission to collect and catalogue artistamps of the world.

Years before, Michael had designed a single stamp, "Arnie" and sent it to some friends. Soon he discovered that other artists were designing stamps and he became fascinated with the idea of producing a comprehensive catalogue and handbook of artistamps produced by mail artists, the *Standard Artistamp Catalogue and Handbook (Canada + Worldwide)* (Fig. 40). Artistamps are art and refer to non-



Figure 40. Michael Bidner working on the *Standard Artistamp Catalogue and Handbook*, Canada, 1986. Photograph by Sue Reeve courtesy of the *London Free Press* Collection of Photographic Negatives at the D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, N6A 3K7.

postage stamps or private printed stamps as opposed to the regular governmental publications designed for use in the official postal systems of the world. The use of the postage stamp format by artists is a phenomenon that appears to have begun in the late 1950s, although there are references to artists creating stamps at an earlier time. Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of artists working in the medium. Michael's project was to fill a void in the conceptual spectrum of art.

In 1982 Michael Bidner remarked, "Why do artists make their own stamps? One could as well ask why artists make art. It is more revealing to note what artists are doing making stamps."* Very few of the issuing authorities contributing to Michael's project were stamp collectors. Those who were tended to include philatelic aspects in their stamp-making, but on the whole issuing authorities simply mimicked the use and look of official postage stamps. Michael commented, "It becomes another medium or form to explore, exploit, and house expression. Any or all aspects of a real stamp may be noted or ignored."

Michael's proposed catalogue would allow readers "the opportunity to examine some of the global contexts of scraps and bits of paper prepared spontaneously by artists, pierced with perforations, lathered with adhesive, affixed to envelopes of every decorative bent, smashed without conscience by cancellations and then presented to recipients by the universal postal system(s) of the world." Soon Michael would stand at my door not with an armful of

packages, but a boxful. Letters were pouring in from all over the world. His project had mushroomed into a massive collection of letters of inquiry and carefully sealed packages of artistamps. Michael became overwhelmed by the sheer volume and magnitude of the project. Initially, Michael had the concept of producing a small catalogue of artistamps. He had treated the project almost as a hobby, not unlike his postage-stamp collecting. But as the letters arrived he realized the scope of his undertaking. The project would consume most of his time and all other arts projects were set aside. Just answering the mail would require hours of writing. For a while he managed to stay on top of it, documenting each sheet or individual stamp by artist. But soon it became apparent that the project would require an elaborate database to record all the information.

Michael spent the next few years designing, re-designing and developing a data base that would allow for full catalogue documentation and production. Now every single stamp image, including a comprehensive breakdown of every sheet of artistamps, along with artist, collaborator(s), country of origin, issuing authority, title, number of editions, stamp/sheet size, technique, gummed/ungummed, perforated/imperforate, year of release, and numbering system was assigned to each single image. In time the entire collection was documented, covering more than 10,000 images, recorded on some 240 computer diskettes and filling more than eighteen large boxes, revealing what would be the culmination of Michael's work in the area of Artistamps.

In June 1984, Michael compiled and curated the first international philatelic exhibition and bourse of artistamps at the Forest City Gallery, London, Ontario, Canada, entitled *Artistampex* (Fig. 39). The walls of the gallery, from floor to ceiling, were covered with artistamps by over one-thousand international artists. Michael was in his glory. He finally felt like he had a handle on his project. Harley, Dogfish, and Crackerjack Kid traveled from the U.S. to attend the opening. The show was very well attended and artistamps made their mark in Canada. Michael received the recognition he deserved.

At the peak of the project Michael was corresponding with more than one thousand artists from twenty-nine countries. He had amassed what many mainstream correspondence artists considered to be the world's largest single collection of artistamps. His postage bills amounted to more than $3,000 Canadian a year. It was nothing for him to send out twenty letters a day. He would rummage through the corporate garbages to find boxes of discarded unused envelopes. His project survived on donations from patrons and he lived from day to day depending on friends to feed him. His family provided him with clothes and creature comforts, love, and support. Michael had a small studio but when the landlord forced him to leave after not having paid rent for more than a year, he moved into a friend's studio. Michael's life focused on the project of developing the first definitive catalogue of Artistamps.

In 1985 Michael learned that he had contracted AIDS. He confided in a very small number of friends, but in a few short months a great many people became aware of the deadly virus. Michael's immune system was breaking down. He knew he had only a few years to live...he hoped he had, anyway. Silently and in desperation he began to search for a home to house and maintain his collection. Loyal to Canada, he sent out a plea to major Canadian arts institutions and galleries. "Ahead of its time"..."No resources available" was the response he received. Fellow mail artists tried reaching institutions on Michael's behalf, but were rebuffed in the same manner. Finally, a small archive in Hungary answered his call. Gyorgy Galantai of Artpool, a well-known creator of artistamps, wrote a letter stating his interest (See

With a renewed sense of enthusiasm and energy Michael thrust himself deeper into the project. He became even more consumed with the idea of completing his catalogue. He wanted Gygory to take possession immediately upon completion of his work.

The next few years would see Michael soaring and diving. He felt like he was riding on a roller coaster. One day he would be so exhausted he couldn't lift his pen and the next day he would be seen writing up a storm. The AIDS virus attacked his body and his mind!

What transpired in the last year of production few people are aware of. It is as much a story about AIDS as it is a story about what happens to the heart, soul and creative mind of an artist who is faced with an end to his creation. But for the purpose of this story I shall only state that the AIDS virus not only attacked Michael but it attacked and almost destroyed his dream. During that year I promised Michael that I would attempt to complete the project for one year. If in that time I was unable to secure a publishing contract I was to arrange for the transportation and transferrance of the collection to Gyorgy.

Michael closed his eyes to this world while surrounded by family and friends on April 5, 1989. At that very moment it began to rain and it seemed like the whole world was crying.

From June 1989 to September 1991 the Galantai's at Artpool were gracious enough to allow me to pursue Michael's dream. Due to the downturn in the economy and the near collapse of the artworld I was unable to complete my endeavor. Artpool now possesses Michael's entire collection of Artistamps and documentation. However, during this time I was able to replace much of Michael's collection and create a new collection of artistamps of the world. For the most part, contributors to Michael's project generously lent their support to my work and perhaps when the economic tides change I will be able to complete both Michael's and my own dream. Artis*tamps Of The World...* it's time will come!

*The source of this quote, according to the author, is attributed to numerous publications Michael Bidner created to inform and define Artistamps for the public and philatelic authorities. (*Ed.*)

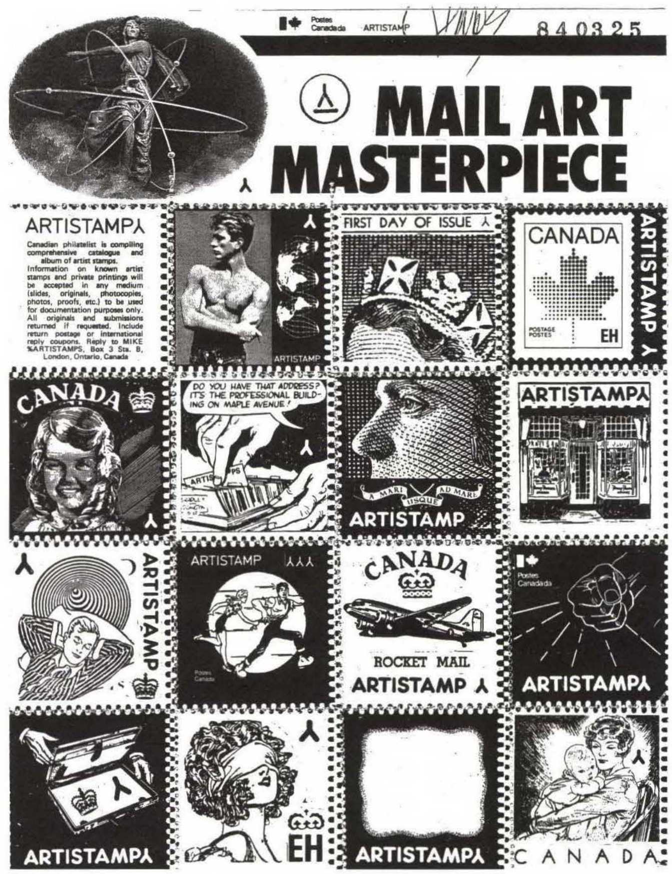


Figure 41. Michael Bidner, *Mail Art Masterpiece Stampsheet*, Canada, 1984. Artistamp.

CHAPTER 8

INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS NETWORK

Carlo Pittore

Ray Johnson established the legitimacy of mail art as a vehicle in its own right, beyond declaration or document, engaging the unit of his correspondents through the New York Correspondence School. Fluxus developed mail art further by widening it to include large, open exhibitions with lists. It was the third generation of mail artists, however, those who were active from the late 1970s through the 1980s, who developed the primacy of the International Artists Network as an open, world-wide public phenomenon of self-sustaining, multiple centers of vitality.

During this period of involvement, many artists world-wide began to identify with, and commit themselves, their art, and resources to the International Artists Network as an essential aspect of their creative lives.

From New York City there was already a large core of mail artists, and the foment toward world-wide networking was intense. E.F. Higgins spread the excitement of artist stamps. By the time Buster Cleveland, the collage artist from California, moved to New York following his exhibition at the New York Animal Hospital in the East Village, 1978, the combustibles were in place.

Artists from behind the Iron Curtain had been desperately seeking participation outside their borders, and György Galantai, Robert Rehfeldt, and Pawel Petasz, to name but a few, led and fed a movement that looked to the west and multi-national exchange through the network. Not only were the forces coming from the repressed, but people like Guy Bleus, Ulises Carrion and Vittore Baroni were fanning great creative furnaces in Europe, motivating and uniting many artists world-wide. From the Far East, Japanese artists Ryosuke Cohen and Shozo Shimamoto introduced networking projects through the art group, AU.

In 1980, I had started a mail art magazine and La Galleria dell'Occhio (through 1987) in the East Village showing mail artists. By the time I organized the "Salva La Campagna Romana" mail art exhibition in Italy, 1982, and the "Salvbrious Third New York Correspondent's School Dinner" in 1983, the forces of the Network were mobilizing everywhere, uniting and energizing.

In New York, where we already had a base of perhaps fifty mail artists, we developed a tight cell that included not only Ed Higgins and Buster Cleveland, but Alex Igloo, Gustav Haaglund, John Evans, Ed Plunkett, David Cole, Mark Bloch, and John P. Jacob. Crackerjack Kid and John Held, Jr. visited often, and from the suburbs there were dozens of others who frequently joined our number, such as Marilyn R. Rosenberg (Fig. 42). Because of our numbers, our intensity, our location, and the inter-connectedness of our activities, we hosted hundreds of visiting mail artists from throughout the United States and from abroad. During one period, I had sleep-in visitors every night for nearly two years. Hans Ruedi Fricker stayed for two weeks making artist stamps and Bern Porter was a regular guest. So, too, were Steve Random and so many more.

Between the New York and Belgium Cavellini Festivals, the "Neoist Festival" in London, the "Franklin Furnace Fiasco," the "Artists Talk on Art Series," and Peter



Figure 42. Crackerjack Kid, *The Crackerjack New York Navel Academy*, U.S.A., 1985. Crackerjack Kid made plaster casts from the navels of fifteen mail artists during a March 2, 1985 performance art event at J.P. Jacob's westside Manhattan studio apartment. Handmade paper pulp was formed in the casts, microwaved, and worn by the participants above. Pictured are (reclined) Steve Random; (front row, left to right) Crackerjack Kid, C. Kafka, E.F. Higgins III, Mark Bloch; (middle row, left to right) Buster Cleveland, Jim Quinlin, Marilyn R. Rosenberg, David Cole, Valeriy Gerlovin, Ben Banville, John Evans; (rear, left to right) Faith Heisler, John P. Jacob, and Carlo Pittore. Photograph courtesy of Andre Banville, Greenfield, MA.

R. Meyer's New York visit, we were not only hosting but visiting, and all of us were crisscrossing, going back and forth, and being invited to meet each other. It was a situation that was and is repeated everywhere throughout the Network. "Tourism" was in.

What was particular about these personal meetings was that most of the artists who met were first known to one another through the Network's correspondence and publication activity, and by the system where everyone of us were not only connected, but interconnected. We shared the same base, the same artistic urge, the same correspondents, the same publications. We were all true Networkers (Fig. 43). Because the Network has no leader and no capital city, and because of its democratic and open nature, new spirits came and added to our energy reserve. Some artists such as Klaus Peter Furstenau and Michel Champendal contributed mightily for a few years and moved on, while others sustained their commitment and are still active.

The International Artists Network represents a unique, evolutionary development in mail art. It is a large, world-wide, self-sustaining entity that has grown



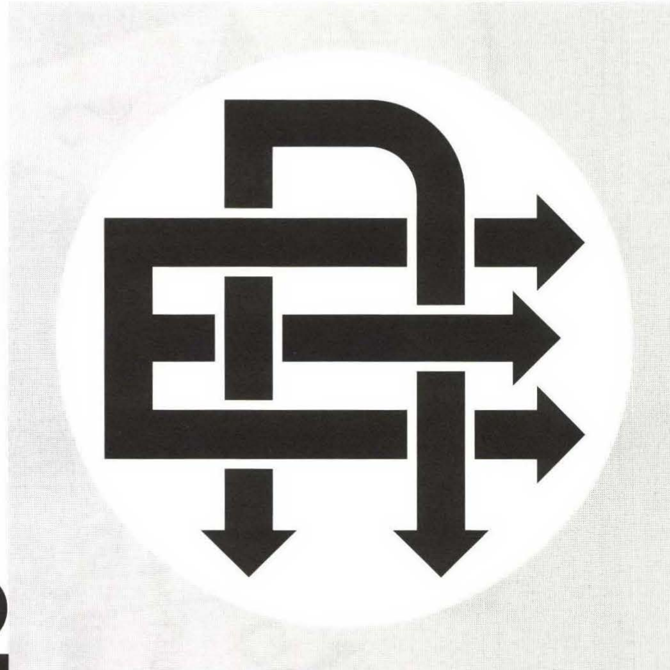
Figure 43. *Bern Porter and the N-tity Conspiracy Meeting*, U.S.A., 1985. Carlo Pittore's East Village gallery (La Galleria dell' Occhio) and residence became the meeting place for numerous mail art events. Speaking at the January 7, 1984 *N-tity Conspiracy Meeting* is Bern Porter (wearing white hat). In the front row (left to right) are Gustave Haggland, Valeriy Gerlovin, Rimma Gerlovina, Paul Zelevansky, Susan Cole, and Warren Lehrer. Behind Porter's head is Jim Quinlan. Seated in the back row (left to right) are Karen Hatch, Trissy Callan, Jim Klein, Joseph Towne, Curtis Wells, Ben "Zona" Banville, and Robert Montoya. Other mail artists in attendance included John P. Jacob, John Evans, Jan Henderiske, Ed Gomez, Buster Cleveland, David Cole, E.F. Higgins III, E.M. Plunkett, Carlo Pittore, Robert Saunders, and Mark Bloch. Photograph by Gary Halpern.

voluntarily and has proven its vitality. The International Artists Network depends not only upon the continued activity of its core, but also on its ability to attract new activist Network adherents like Mark Corroto a.k.a. FaGaGaGa.

The 1990s will test whether the International Artists Network can continue to sustain itself, with its vision of a large, open community of relating, activistic artists. I believe it is an important development that contributes mightily, not only to the well being of each of us as individuals, but to the vitality and health of the globe, at least as far as art and artists are concerned. Having created such a Network, already a miracle in itself, we would be remiss to let it die, to fall back entirely on history, memories, or self-promotion; to do so now would kill a rare cosmos. As each of us continues our personal commitment to art, let us also continue and strengthen our commitment to the world-wide community we have nurtured. This is the time to re-awaken after burnout, to rekindle, to re-acquaint, to revitalize, to renew. Art is not the product of an individual, but the product of communal awareness.

Open Aesthetics
Aesthetics parallel reflect contain itAll.
ItAll is allThought allSaid allActed byAll
At the cusp of our cenozoicEcozoic eras where patriarchy's affects burden usAll with subservience to dictators religions cults and the Democratic votingDeath of our minorities/others/ unlikes/dissidents, censorship no longer works. Censorship is recognized as biting theFinger that follows itAll, theFinger that points to itAll. In our coming ecozoic age the openCircle openEar replaces expertPanels and humanEarth respect redefines economics.

Coco Gordon



PART 2 OPEN AESTHETICS

Visual poet David Cole introduces this section with an intimate view of networking art as an experiential, open, process aesthetic involving trust, patience and mutual esteem. Estera Milman traces the origin of this process aethetic in twentieth-century art and Guy Bleus lists forty-four statements on the aesthetics of mail art communication. While aesthetic collaboration and open communication imbues a capacity for feeling and grounds us in our communities and the world, censorship of art and expression is an ever-present threat in both democracies and totalitarian regimes. A Polish and a Russian mail artist, Pawel Petasz and Rea Nikonova, relate how evasive, networker strategies and risk-taking were often used to circumvent repressive East/West ideology and rhetoric before and after the advent of former Soviet President Gorbachev's *glasnost* policies.

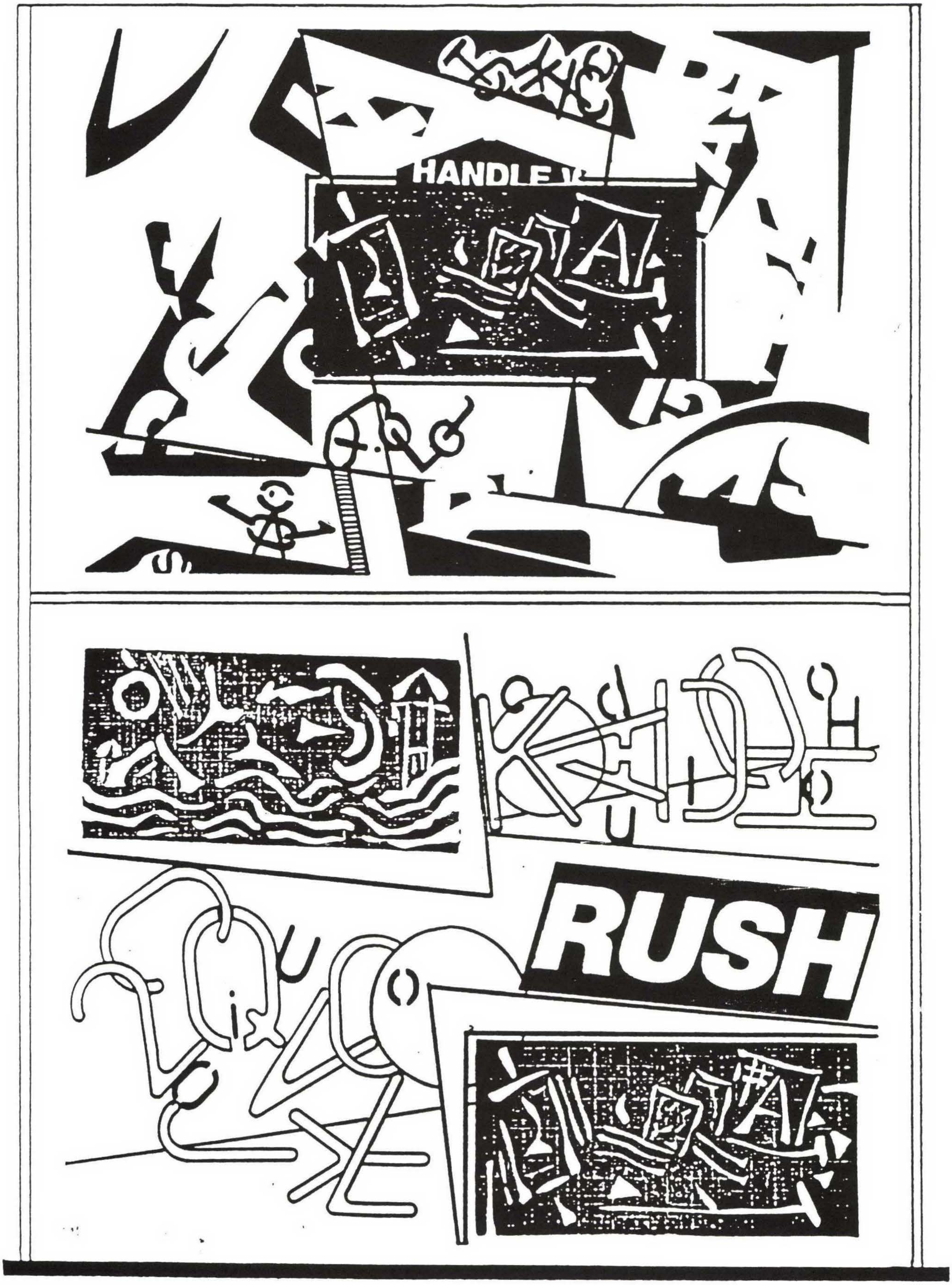


Figure 44. David Cole, *Untitled Postcard.* U.S.A., 1989. Mixed Media.

CHAPTER 9

THE OPEN LETTER AESTHETIC

David Cole

The act of making art is a lonely struggle. It is rooted in a hand/eye/mind gift. We are surprised by the creative perception and abilities that we discover we have. It is also rooted in a sense of responsible witnessing of the experience of being human at a particular time and in a particular culture.

Art is an intellectual and aesthetic challenge; a strangely shifting, pulsating balance of inherent attraction. Art provides a stage or podium from which to participate in the making of, or the re-awakening to, the mysterious signs, symbols, and perceptions through which adults pierce the veil of the ordinary in order to grasp the real.

The artists of the past have given us a tradition of knowledge and joy. The activity of being an artist seems to be a question of personal strength, perseverance, and intelligence. Despite all the late romantic histories of the plight of the artist, both good and bad, the question of being an artist seems to be an inner quest, not an outer pose or position. In a world perilously without vocations, art seems to be an authentic choosing.

Like many others, I began to live and work within the inner dynamic of seeing/experiencing and making evident. I knew that social time for an artist was often untimely; that the immediate (contemporary) audience was confused, startled, or frightened by what they saw. Yet I trusted in my suasive powers, understanding them to be part of the making act—one discovers how to say/see something so that others can hear/see it. What I might call the suasive power is an almost tactile reality for an artist: the curve seen, the curve in seeing, the curve sent/set on the paper are "bundled" together. The act of seeing is articulate. Art is the evidence of articulation.

Art seemed to me to be about opening up and letting the creative energy in. I referred to this as noumenal energy, and I imagined that there was a continuous jetstream of overarching noumenal energy that was triggered by a common request for creativity by others unknown, who were in similar circumstances, heads down, struggling for sanity and beauty and energy and loving on a moment-by-moment basis and almost feeling a "creative material" present that I was working in, through and with. Some days' work was so beautiful to me after the fact that, as I said "thank you", I felt that the energy and the insight I was having were only possible because unknown others were simultaneously and selflessly feeding into and out from this shared, unseen but posited stream of seeing, feeling, and knowing. At that point I experienced art as a gift, as grace, and I tried to keep it holy. I tried to imaginatively feed back into it the same support and open-heartedness that I felt I was receiving.

But, of course, I was both alone and isolated. Having been a teacher, I recognized the tremendous feedback and stimulation, as well as burden, that students provide their teachers. I had also experienced the thrill of asking questions that one really did not have the answers for. My "perfect" moment in teaching came when an entire class of students gave answers that I had in no way anticipated, only energized. The simultaneous problem was that I did not have the school to continue to operate in this way, to build upon seeking as the center of teaching. My problem was the conservatism of colleagues and institutions.

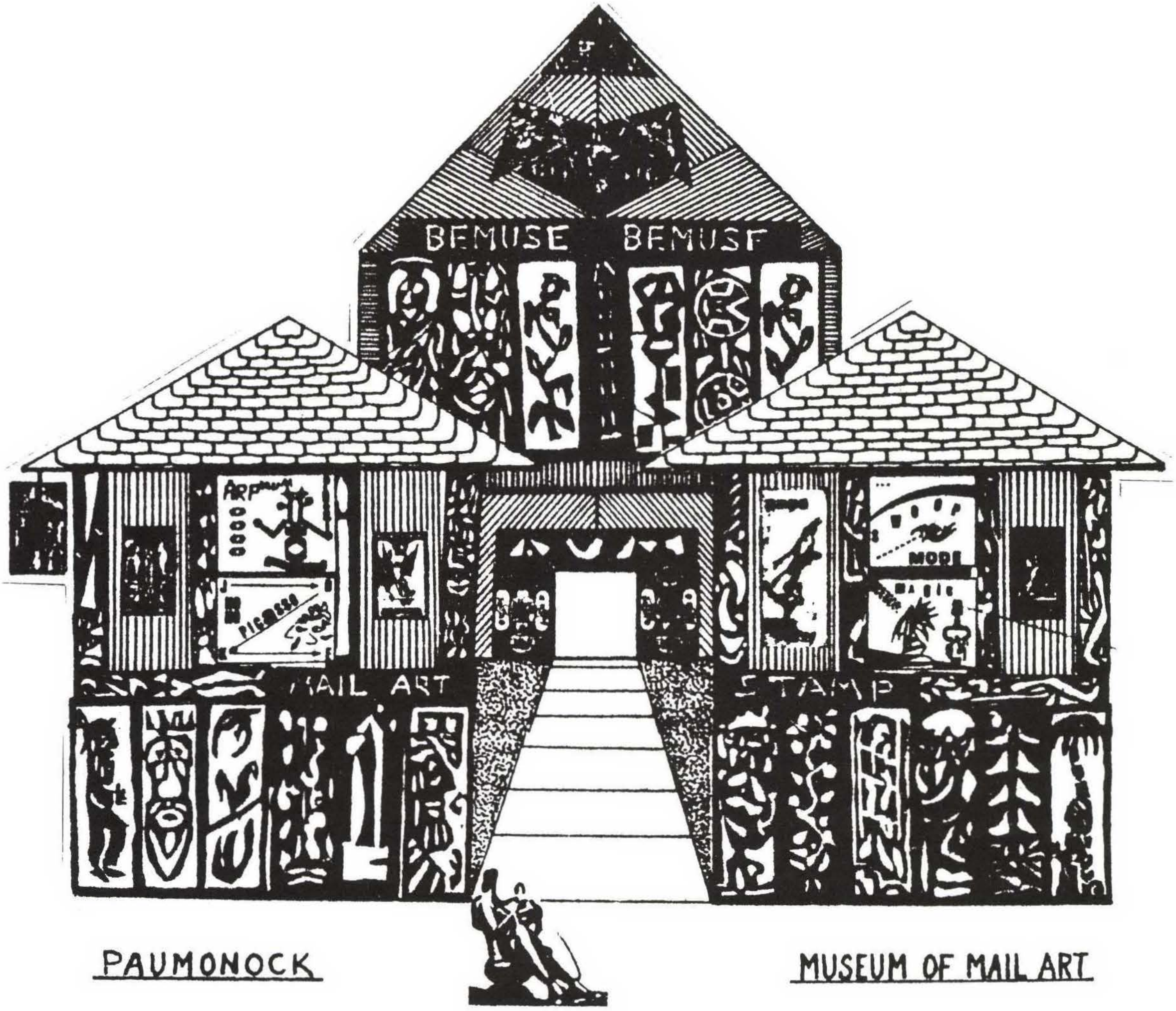


Figure 45. David Cole, *Paumonock Museum of Mail Art*, U.S.A., 1985. Artists' Bookwork (cover detail).

Network Values

Thus, when I was thrust into the role of artist, I came with a distrust of established procedures. I started out in an artist-run gallery that I helped found. To my mind, it was a classroom on the hoof. It was to be a more interesting place than the retail stores which surrounded it or the galleries which pandered to self-made fads, or the classrooms that destroyed curiosity in the need for control. A financial basis was never found for this enterprise except borrowed money from families (one wage-earner who supported the artist-mate!). Grants were hopeless: they were based on redundant models. Granting agencies asked the artist to fill in forms that they had designed—seeking and supporting only bureaucratic art!

I was frustrated by my inability to reach a public audience and frustrated by artist colleagues who, perhaps like myself, continue to hope to be rescued from stalemate by discovery. So, I turned and found the correspondence art network already in vibration. To my astonishment and relief, the values espoused by this network were exactly what I was looking for: all artists accepted, no work was rejected, no work was returned (thus emphasizing the act of giving) and documentation was provided as possible.

The network provided both an outlet and a response—it seemed to me to promise the collegiality of seeking either beyond or beneath the system. It had the built-in irony of using the neutral medium of the postal system as vehicle. It was inherently a communications medium with chance

thrown in: mail being lost, mail being censored, unsympathetic correspondent reached, highly empathetic correspondent found, cultural and linguistic junctions and disjunctions, broad ranges of ages, social backgrounds, educations, powerful forces of immediate circumstances (that is, one could be sending joyous art to someone in despair without knowing it). The question of how meaning and chance interrelate was thus laid openly on the table, and it was so presented by the kind of artist for whom language was one of the primary media being explored.

Although this would seem to be a prime area for intellectual or theoretical study (the gathering and analysis of data), as a participant the situation was precisely reversed. That is, along with everyone else in the network, I acted subjectively. I was in the network because I had to be, because I couldn't stem the creativity, because I believed that inter-subjective knowledge was more legitimate than apparently objective knowledge. And every time I doubted and once again addressed the art world, I discovered fads, phony isms, pandering and media manipulation. Art was a commodity and only a commodity; it was slick, created for its intended.

The flow of mail art did, indeed, lead to the reality that the mailbox is a museum. I felt that I was involved in a circulating stream of perception and re-perception. I always wanted to up the ante! Using what skill and humor I had, I wanted to increase the value of my art by sharing it openly.

The correspondence art webwork quickly revealed that many other artists were trying to solve, experience, dramatize aesthetic interests similar to my own. So, once the exchange began, the question became how to compose oneself within the communal orchestra. It was immediately obvious that the composition could not be directed overall—artists were too idiosyncratic and/or obstinate, too surrounded with individual interests and problems and issues and circumstances to be led, but there was a built-in tolerance which each of us had to assume in order to participate.

Tolerance was made possible by separation and distance and the time-lag involved in the exchange. I understood the time-lag, in particular, to be a given of the art done in the network. It gave me the right to concentrate in whatever way I saw fit and possible.

Separation was a motive for joining the network, both to overcome the isolation by finding colleagues and to treasure the isolation by being honest with oneself as an artist. The time-lag of correspondence made the integrity of response possible, as a goal if not an achievement.

So, correspondence art was a way of sharing in a community, of giving art away—and clearing space to work again, of collecting related work, of hearing the communal tune, of crossing barriers, of finding stimulation, of dialoguing, trialoguing, etc. It was a mixed blessing, of course. The network was out of one's own control; one had to school oneself in tolerance, in being laid-back, in mellow, but there were always wonder-filled surprises, new directions, new thoughts, common sympathies.

Politics and Mail Art

Politics as an aspect of the network is often referred to as a democratic, pluralistic ideal, in the political even more than in the personal sense. Though I do not pursue political topics as an aesthetic interest, I am well aware of the political implications of correspondence art. I realize that there will be different political uses made of mail art, but, ironically, beneath all the political issues I think that the localism of mail art is the political issue that runs afoul of all political systems, whether of the left, right, or middle. It is the very fact that the middle polities also act against true artist interests that lead me to believe that correspondence is the subversive act itself.

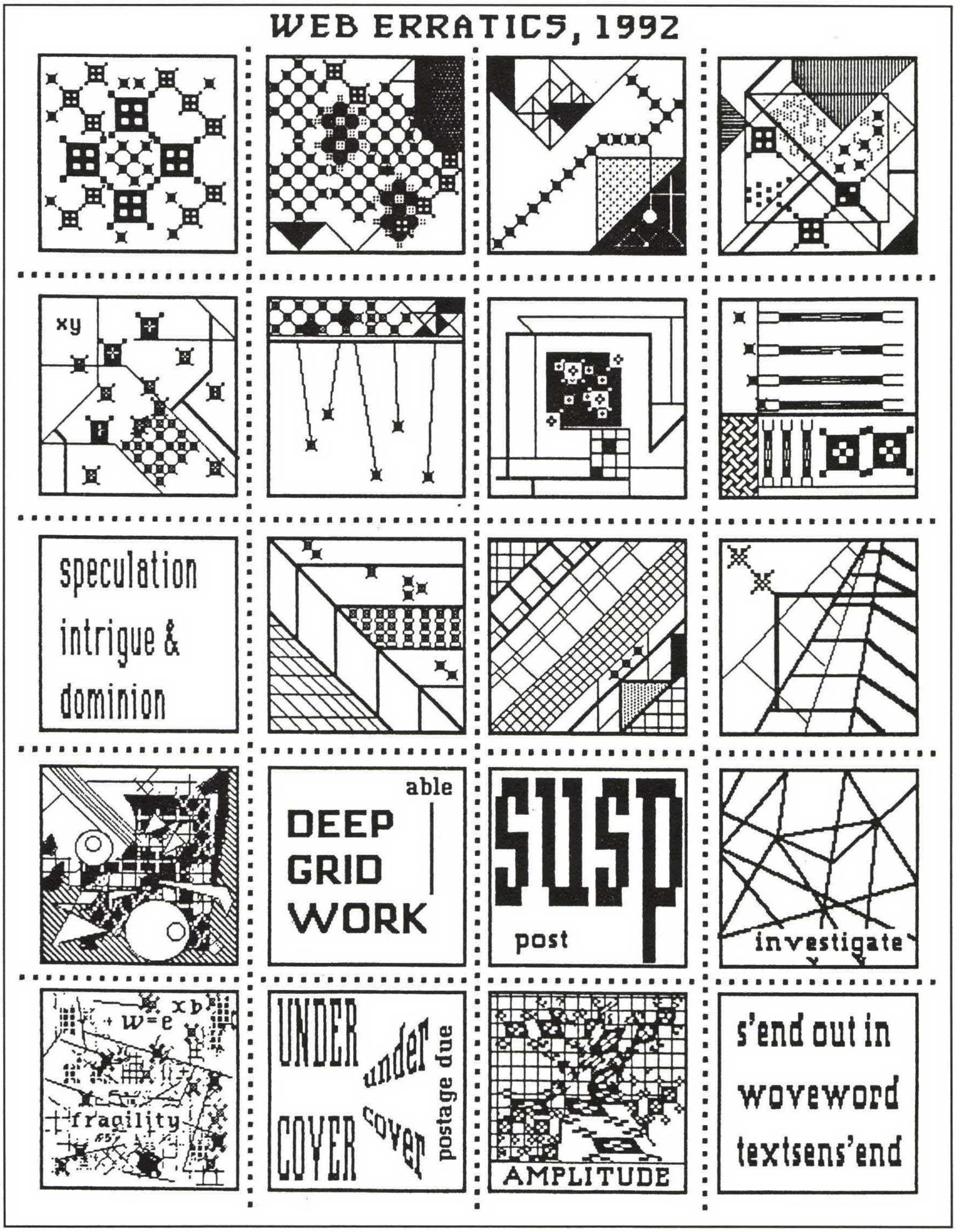


Figure 46. David Cole, *Web Erratics*, U.S.A.,1992. Artists' Stampsheet.

When artists choose to create an enclosed system of exchange and value, and then curate their own exhibitions, they are in effect saying "no" to all establishments. I am not at all sure that this is a sound overall political strategy, but I think that it is a sound aesthetic strategy.

I think that all artists are outlaws; their work must operate on cultures by undercutting or overwhelming. The strength of the network thus far has been precisely the failure of anyone or any one group to set forth exclusive rules, yet many of us continue to participate.

I understand correspondence art as a subtext: an aesthetic movement of its time that sweeps back and forth across the shared meanings and confusions transmitted to it by both public media and private histories. It is the study of local intensities and occurrences, folk reality, in the context of larger historical and artistic images. The mail artist collages the images taken from newspapers, for example; he or she has no more control over the actual evocation of those images than does the originating newspaper. The local artist's contribution is not in the statement proffered, but in the "diary enlarged." It is the steadiness of the diaristic vision over the long, personal haul that is of importance. We are witnessing and experiencing cultural madness cloaked as war-baiting sense, political "sound bites" befogging common sense, economic labels hiding actual bone-and-tissue circumstances.

A Diary Enlarged

A "diary enlarged" is the daily activity of an artist to struggle with his/her perception/experience of life with the tools chosen and through the medium discovered. It exists on a scale of one; the artist's own search for form discoverable. Correspondence art espouses a scale of one-to-one; that is, it rotates the work of personal perception through a turn of 180 degrees to be received as a personal message, an incoming diary entry into the personal perception of another artist. Correspondence artists allow themselves to be "invaded" by messages, images, symbols of other private individuals. Whether or not an individual artist thought that this was happening is another question, but the fact of the mailbox museum remains. One's individual perceptions are affected by the network's. For most of us this has been a boon; it has extended our perceptions across cultures, age groups, personal idiosyncrasies; it has provided a sense of purpose and place, and an ongoing, dynamic movement. At the same time, none of us have yet addressed the true breadth of this phenomenon.

I distinguish between a "diary enlarged" and a "diary inflated." An enlargement of one's diary means simply to experience it as within a chain, network, webwork of other similar diaries. A diary inflated means the cultural inflation of the significance of an individual's diary at the expense of others. The entire body of work called correspondence art is a mesh of individual's art—their life stories in perception. The extraordinary value of this body of work is in the fact that it has once been exchanged freely; it has the value of being given away, important enough to be shared without strings attached. Giving is healing, especially if it has come at the expense of ego!

The simple, sobering fact is that the body of artwork created within the network both could and should fill a huge archive, which would be the largest body of interrelated perception of this period in art history. Since this will not in reality occur; it remains noumenal in artmind!

I Speak A Network Language

But let me turn from the grandiose to the actual. Within correspondence art an incredible exploration of common symbol-making occurs. I know for certain that my work leans against the work of many other artists; my art is made (more) intelligible because of its network context; its energy is within this context and plays over against it as foil and thrust.

I speak a network language. I am nourished by the overt and covert tactics of this fabricmaking. I am amused by the playground. I am sustained by the intuited spirit.

That is not to say that I am satisfied. That is not to say that more solid echoes wouldn't be nice. That is not to say

that the way forward is not still mysterious. That is not to say that the eternal open network can be grasped. That is not to say that either the cast of characters or the plot is complete, or that art is not self-indulgent as well as open-hearted.

Correspondence Dialogue

In some sense I reached my climax as a correspondence artist in The Scroll Unrolls exhibition in Ein-Hod, Israel. I was surrounded by an exhibit which seemed to be an extension of my mind through which I could actually walk; I recognized the voices of the many artists with whom I had been in touch, and I particularly recognized the gift-givingness. At the same time, I never wanted to do another mail art show with any less space or money available for documentation.

Anyway, after my return from Israel, after a fitful start, I began to concentrate on dialogues. I began with a strange, intense correspondence concerning both the tacit and overt sexual energy involved in art-making. I confronted, and shared, with three correspondents the direct sensual experience of the making of visual poems. The intimacy engendered at my end of the exchanges was variously received at the other... My book, *The Animate Inner Voice*, done in 1989, is the completion of that concern (Fig. 48). In that work I redirected my vision inward to the anima/animus within myself.

But it is the recognition of the sensual, as well as the intellectual, reality of art-making that is at the root of my latest stage of correspondence art. I began to collaborate with other correspondents simply as a way of acknowledging an affective energy flow—I wrote and drew work that elicited responses I could respond to in turn. As artists we became interdependent in a delightful and energetic way. We satisfied and surprised one another with our art. We were colleagues, intellectual and emotional, at a distance. Two collaborations have been ongoing for four years—one collaboration has surfaced into public works, one has remained entirely private. Both correspondences are filled with variety, code, exploration, argument, and resolution (both senses). I have now done extensive collaborations with six other artists.

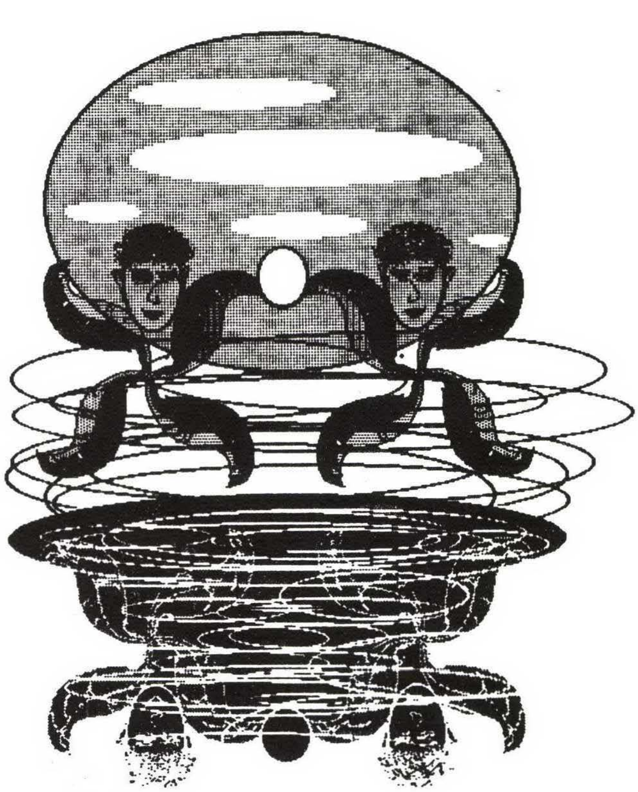


Figure 47. David Cole, *Within the Turning*, U.S.A., 1989. Artists' Book.

My interest in actual collaboration on the same piece of paper with another visual poet stems from wanting to know how and whether poets see the page similarly. I have not done these collaborations as studies, but as art events; thus, I am in no position to know anything other than what happened, to see the pieces created and to enjoy them for the participatory creations that they are. In retrospect, I realize that all of the work was created with a sort of "blind" thrown in; there was very little agreement before the fact



Figure 48. David Cole, *Animate Inner Voice*, 1989. Artists' Book.

about what would take place; rather, there was a commitment of time and energy as long as it lasts. This reinforces the chancy or dicey quality so often felt in mail art—one creates art in the face of not knowing where or how it would be received or valued. My life as an artist is precisely this throwing outward into dimly seen space. What has thrilled me in collaboration is the echoes that have reached me from the darkness. Ahem!

Collaboration Aesthetics

Collaboration involves trust, kinship of perception, curiosity, patience, mutual esteem, energy, and space and time, both in the artistic personalities of the collaborators and on the "canvas" shared. Collaboration requires equal amounts of daring to do and daring to be done to. Collaborations spar, riff, crisscross, undercut, surround, tear, mend, expand, blot out, eliminate altogether; they are "interferences," trespasses, hand-holdings, exchanged glances, deep insights, shoutings, and murmurings.

To collaborate means to begin and then to let the beginning suggest its own direction. The piece of work accretes in complexity and value as it moves back and forth; each new step requires greater daring to enter and a sense of greater loss as the piece vanishes into completion. Yes, it vanishes into completion, for it stands between the two collaborators, belonging exactly to neither.

To collaborate at a distance and over the time needed to exchange the ongoing work through the mail means that the work itself re-emerges to mind, sight, and hand. What left one poet's hand returns altered, in one way completed, in another way suggesting a new direction. The process of doing art is jolted by the new surface appearing just as it draws one into it as an active energy. The work of collaborative art actually seems to stretch itself, the surface of the paper gains a dimension of time created and action required. It differs radically from conversation insofar as the coherence of the medium is mutually arbitrary; that is to say, the concrete piece of work that is before either artist at any one moment is freely open; one may move it in any direction that one sees or says. Each obeys form-making rules of one's own perception and technique. These "rules" are seldom articulated clearly, and collaboration is precisely about the exploration and extension of those unspoken rules within the context of mutual perception.

At the same time, these visual poetic collaborations are intrinsically concerned with language, with what each poet means, with what each poet understands. The pieces grow slowly, word by word, or within words. They are made within the emotive force and focus of language. They speak directly, that is, directly from one person to another. Thus, they are heard and overheard simultaneously. They are not about juxtaposition; they are intralogues carried on through a technique of dialogue; that is, since the "canvas" is unique, both artists must enter into the communal texture, leaving traces, not leaving traces. On occasion, the collaborations become seamless, as if woven by one consciousness into which both poets have surrendered themselves. This astonishes the



Figure 49. David Cole and Marilyn R. Rosenberg, *TRACK*, U.S.A., 1987. Artists' Bookwork. Photograph by Marilyn R. Rosenberg.

collaborators and is an occasion for celebration. The light of one candle gleaming in the dark.

I have been doing collaborations out of a sense of serious playfulness (Fig. 49). On the playground of art, where people draw lines, place obstacles, note shadows, shift weights, muse and bemuse; on the playground of language, where people tell stories, gather information, pass rumors on, swallow lies, share gossip, give directions, and map courses; on these two overlapping playgrounds certain artists sit observing the meaning of the banter, the beauty of the curve. They sit, gather, and distill.

Then, on the playground of blank space, they create mysterious traces of what remains in their presence. That presence is a confrontation between energy and absence. That presence is a recollection, and a recollection device. That presence is experienced aloneness, and an odd, nerve-tingling trigger of light. That presence is a passageway of vision animated by effort-birth. Scenes arrive and disappear; words arrive and disappear; characters arrive and disappear; concentration arrives and disappears. The presence requires a gesture. Light arrives and disappears. A trace of a gesture incoils, shears.

> To me something like that happens
> To any artist something like this happens

City art, the art of cosmopolitan life, the art of complex social interactions, the art of patterned knowing, the art of the marketplace, the legislature, the newspapers. Trails of stories, trails of footprints, trails of feelings. Mixed motives, mixed missions, mixed outcomes. Artists in the stew, the stew aboil on the stove.

Art is the description of moments of coherence, of light. There is light everywhere, the vibrating stasis of perception. Art is a transmutation of a transmutation. Art is the affection



Figure 50. Marilyn R. Rosenberg (foreground), Sheril Cunning, (middleground), David Cole (background), and Crackerjack Kid (not pictured) as collaborators in the March 19–21, 1992 Netshaker Harmonic Divergence, Hanover, New Hampshire. Handmade paper book signatures from *Spring Garden* are seen drying at Crackerjack Kid's home.

of affection. Beginnings must be made, anytime, any time at all. Collaboration is the concrete foil cast, a duel madness, a dual magic. There, a pool of water rippled by a fountain, do you see it? On either side of the pool a barefooted artist sits, lightly splashing, twirling the water, feet glistened, sight line bends in water, moving slower. Ripples intertwine with ripples. The moment comes, goes. A single petal drops into the pool; both watch it, breathing outward, outword.

Mystic Correspondence

As you can see, I think that art arises from a sense of immediate mystery and goes to a sense of immediate mystery. Correspondence art is tendril art, reaching outward toward both light and new grips, or being forced outward by energy within, by innate growth—the life-whish of death, the death-whish of life. I always think of correspondence art as radical art, art of the roots, the one-to-one correspondence of the mysterious, the subterranean cave-drawings beneath the billboard culture of high, publicized art. I do not know how the subterranean stream ultimately affects the growth above; steady work, worm work!

What distinguishes correspondence art from simply undiscovered or unacknowledged art is that it courses around with energy; it acts, it creates a shared experience. All art is the explosion of a seed. Art is always both early and late because it creates the force of an immediate now, which slices world-viewing into before and after. Artists seek, perhaps require, the experience of being within the slicing, within the cracking open, within the force of articulating, within the need to scream. Both sensuous pleasure and liminal forms. A need to be born, a need to be a-bearing.

Mystery is the consciousness of mystery, just as myth-making is the consciousness of being enfolded already within a myth-made. We can only stretch analogies. Reshape them. Reflect upon them our correspondence with the image that we see in the mirror. So odd, the chisel tears away the stone to reveal the self of the stone, as we can see it. What is taken away roughly, leaves what remains smoothly. Then polish, until one finds oneself with flimsiest cloth rubbing what is now iconic and massive. Solid and light. The entrancement of effort, effort, effort—polishing the stone that has become the mirror. Ah, this water planet of reflection and long rains of time. Beginnings must be made, completions must vanish.

Correspondence Aesthetics

The aesthetic groundrules of correspondence are as follows:

1. The network is "discovered" independently; that is, there is something within the way that an artist is working that

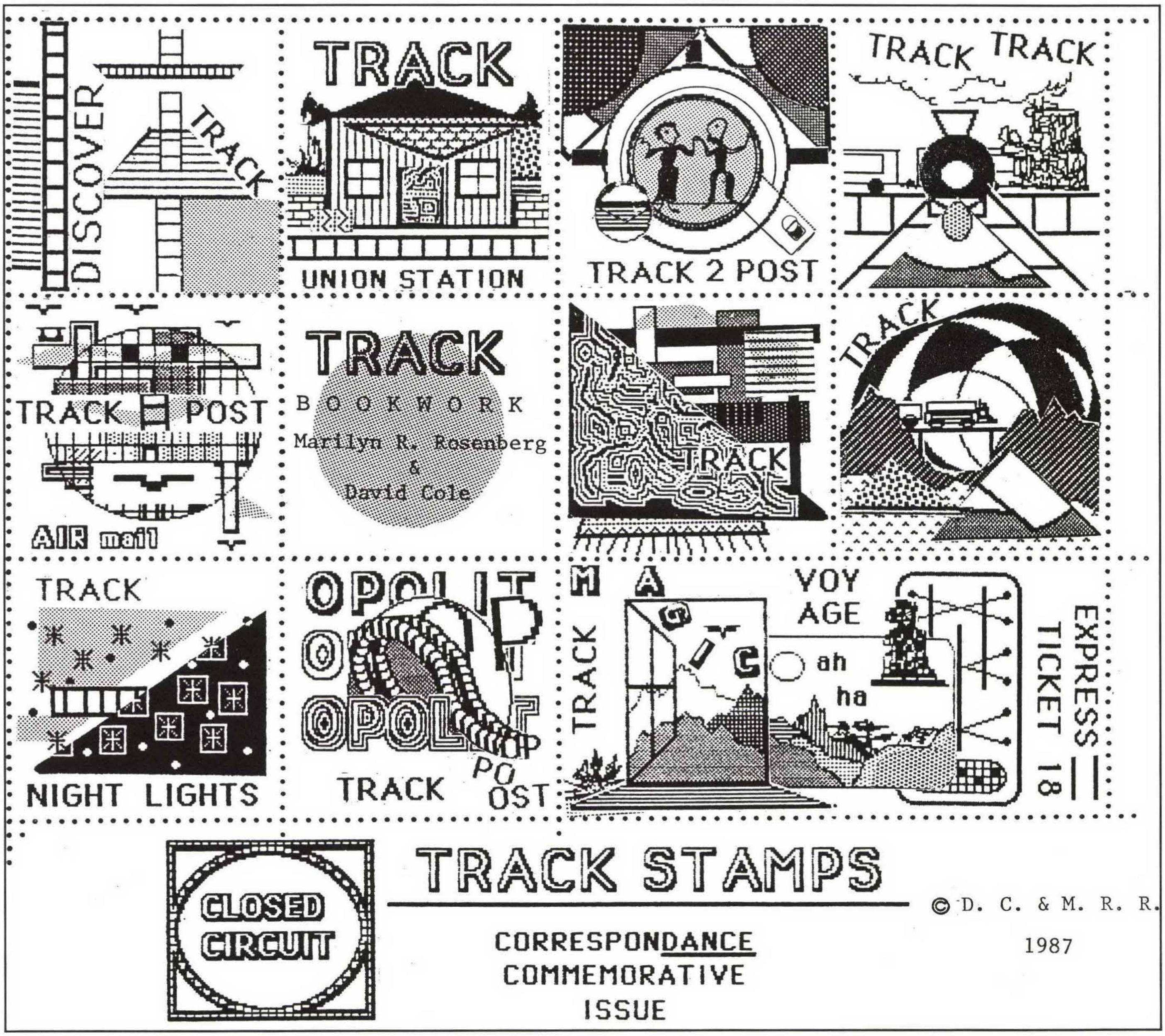


Figure 51. David Cole and Marilyn R. Rosenberg, *TRACK STAMPS*, U.S.A., 1987. Artists' Stampsheet.

requires the completion of sending artworks freely outward to a concrete "other." There is something conversational implied.

2. The value of the artwork is directly made by the recipient. None of us can forget our original amazement at receiving both such volumes and such beauties of art. There is a use-value created, a magic, if you will. The mailed-out artwork reaches in-to the receiver.

3. The correspondence artist experiences him/herself as a passage through whom art is flowing. This may have strong mystical, political, or personal implications for each individual artist. Thus far, the strength of the network has been that these implications have not been codified. The unstated agreement is that each of us makes art in scale.

4. *In scale* means both small enough to be postable and personal enough to be translatable by the receiver. In scale

means concentration upon a detail within an obviously much much larger whole. Aesthetically this is important in two ways. First, most mail art is daily or occasional (for the occasion). It has the immediacy of letter-writing done within the framework of literature. Second, it is small—for example, artist stamps, within a framework of mosaic.

5. An aesthetic perception rests between artistic events—the making of an artwork and the receiving of a response. Each transmission cycle (turn and return) encloses a two-ended perception. That is, much of my artwork is done with the artwork of my correspondent in front of me as I work—responding, extending, reflecting, changing my perception of what I am doing. Collaboration is simply a way of condensing this aesthetic perception. Networking is art-making as filament.

6. Correspondence art is a communal exploration of the ground and the intense speechlessness and sensuous swoon involved in beginning. It is an exploration of the colloquial baseline of meaning, both within one's own mind/eye and between two speakers. It can never be gainsaid that correspondence art is private, emphatically private, preciously private, ephemerally private. Each of us experiences the making of art as the walking along an edge, an edge of boldness. When one beholds the boldness of the other, accepts the boldness of the other, honors the boldness of the other, then an intimacy of vision into the whole occurs. Art is the appreciation of the whole within the other just as whole occurs within the self. The aesthetic is the transmission and then the transmigration of the whole. The discovery of discovery.

7. What I have said heretofore belies what I actually know of the tremendous difference in intentions in mail art—in the actual content of art works, as distinct from the participation in the correspondence process. I do not think that most mail artists give up their personal visions,

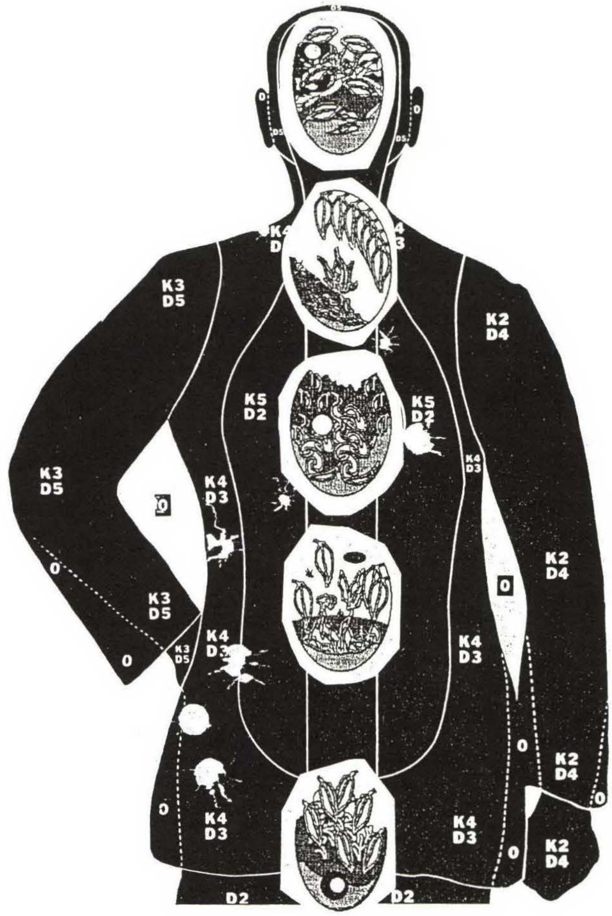


Figure 52. David Cole, *Meta Net Spirit Congress*, U.S.A., 1992. Artists' Book (cover detail). Cole danced around the accordian style bookwork during a group *Spirit Netlink Performance* at Crackerjack Kid's 1992 Netshaker Harmonic Divergence, March 19–21, 1992, Hanover, New Hampshire.

vocabularies, approaches to art to work within a common aesthetic; correspondence art is not communal art, it is a communal act.

Art as Spiritual Path

Art is a spiritual path, for it evanesces. It vanishes from the artist in the direction of the viewer; it vanishes from the "canvas" in the direction of the feelings. It is insubstantial solidity. Art is also a spiritual path for the artist because it is a discipline and perception in the direction of the whole; it is micro-cosmic reenactment of harmony, experienced as form. Form is a sense of time completed and space balanced or enclosed. Thus art is a ritual performance, a calling into the presence of unknown energy.

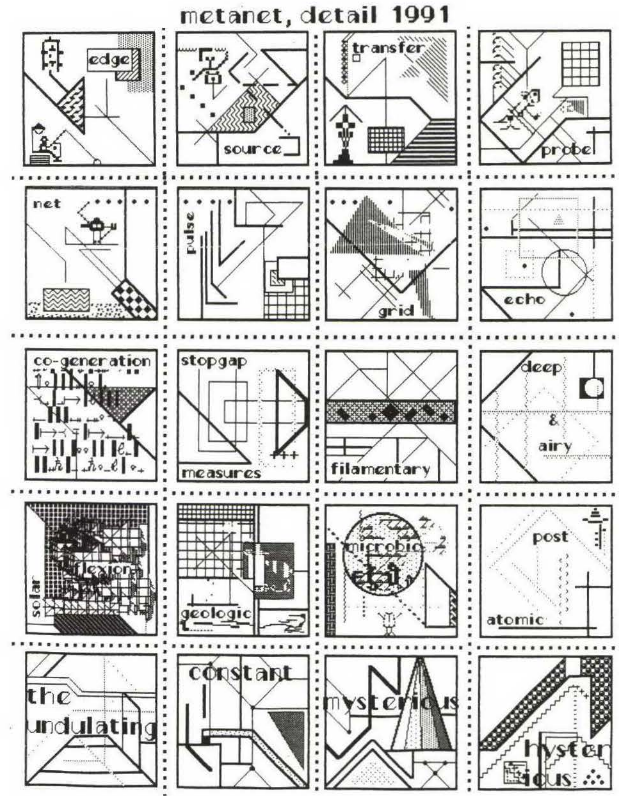


Figure 53. David Cole, *Metanet, Detail.* U.S.A., 1992. Artists' Stamp.

We have certainly learned from the correspondence art network that the rituals enacted and the spirits evoked are various. Perhaps we have learned that the rituals and spirits are so private, so personal as to beggar the notion of communal harmony. We have been able to work and play together precisely because we are separated in space and are given the luxury of tome to respond thoughtfully. At the same time, we wonder whether we are stretched out upon a larger ritual canvas, that no one of us can shape. That has been the blessing of the activity, the sense of participation. The question of how similar we are, how much we correspond, arises—stimulates and perplexes. Thus, we collaborate simply by continuing to be in contact, becoming aware of the exchange of energy through the arrival of another artist's message. And we collaborate more directly by trying to share the fabric itself, trying to hearsee an echo or a new voice returning.

Ah, I think I shall stop, for this has become too one-sided. I have slopped a brushful of paint on my side of the transparent glass, or I have laid down my pattern on the ground. Enough! I think I'll take a walk about. I'll go out and see how the world wraps around.

I certainly realize that I have taken the vague rather than the direct path here. I haven't answered the questions about the details; partly this is because my answers about the details can only be shown, not discussed. The way of paying attention and trusting to chance. Is this letter correspondence or correspondence art? Is it fiction or philosophy or poetry? It is open-ended and awaits completion.

* * * * * *

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 10

PROCESS AESTHETICS, ETERNAL NETWORKS, READY-MADE EVERYDAY ACTIONS AND OTHER POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS DRUGS

Estera Milman

> A point that I want very much to establish is that the choice of these "ready-mades" was never dictated by aesthetic delectation. The choice was based on a reaction of *visual indifference* with a total absence of good or bad taste...in fact a complete anesthesia.
>
> I realized soon that the danger of repeating indiscriminately this form of expression and decided to limit the production of "ready-mades" to a small number yearly. I was aware at that time that, for the spectator even more than for the artist, *art is a habit-forming drug* and I wanted to protect my "ready-mades" against such *contamination.*
>
> – Marcel Duchamp[1]

In "An Introduction to Dada" originally published as an insert to Robert Motherwell's influential 1951 edition of *The Dada Painters and Poets*, Tristan Tzara presents a number of statements on the interrelationship posed between art and life that coincide, to an uncanny extent, with Robert Filliou's 1963 definition of the "Eternal Network." Tzara insists that participants in Dada "had repudiated all distinction between life and poetry"[2] and had determined that "the real aim of art (was) integration with the present-day world."[3] Although this posteriori reflection is specific to the actions of a World War I era avant-garde, it further corresponds to myriad mid-century artistic strategies that revolved around the so called "art/life dichotomy" including the environments and happenings of Allan Kaprow, the correspondence networks of Ray Johnson, Fluxus, the Nouveaux Realists, and Arte Povera. Furthermore, an expanding community of contemporary artists continues to rally around a banner dedicated to the inseparableness of art and life. Tzara explained that participants in Dada sought to integrate art with their present day world because "it seemed to us...that literature and art had become institutions located on the margin of life."[4] However, despite the Dadaists' (and the Surrealists') attempts to dissolve distinctions between life and poetry, the institution of art's position within life did not shift closer to center. The proposed marriage lacked prerequisite reciprocity. Life, after all, did not ask to be integrated with art.

First and foremost, mail art networks are "cultures." In their pure, transitive state (that is to say, outside the museum, gallery, and alternative space system), correspondence works are overtly transactional; they serve as a means by which community itself is established and through which members of the culture interact. However, mail art networks differ from other communities through their self-determined classification as "art" cultures. As a result, participants in contemporary art networks, despite their successful repudiation of all distinction between receiver and art maker, have had little more success moving away from the margin of life than did their early twentieth-century precursors. That such is the case is dependent, to a certain extent, upon their unwillingness to liberate themselves from the myth that the *aesthetic* is exclusively dependent upon *art* and consequently upon the *artist.* Spectator/artist and artist/spectator remain mutually *contaminated* by a self-injected *habit-forming drug.*

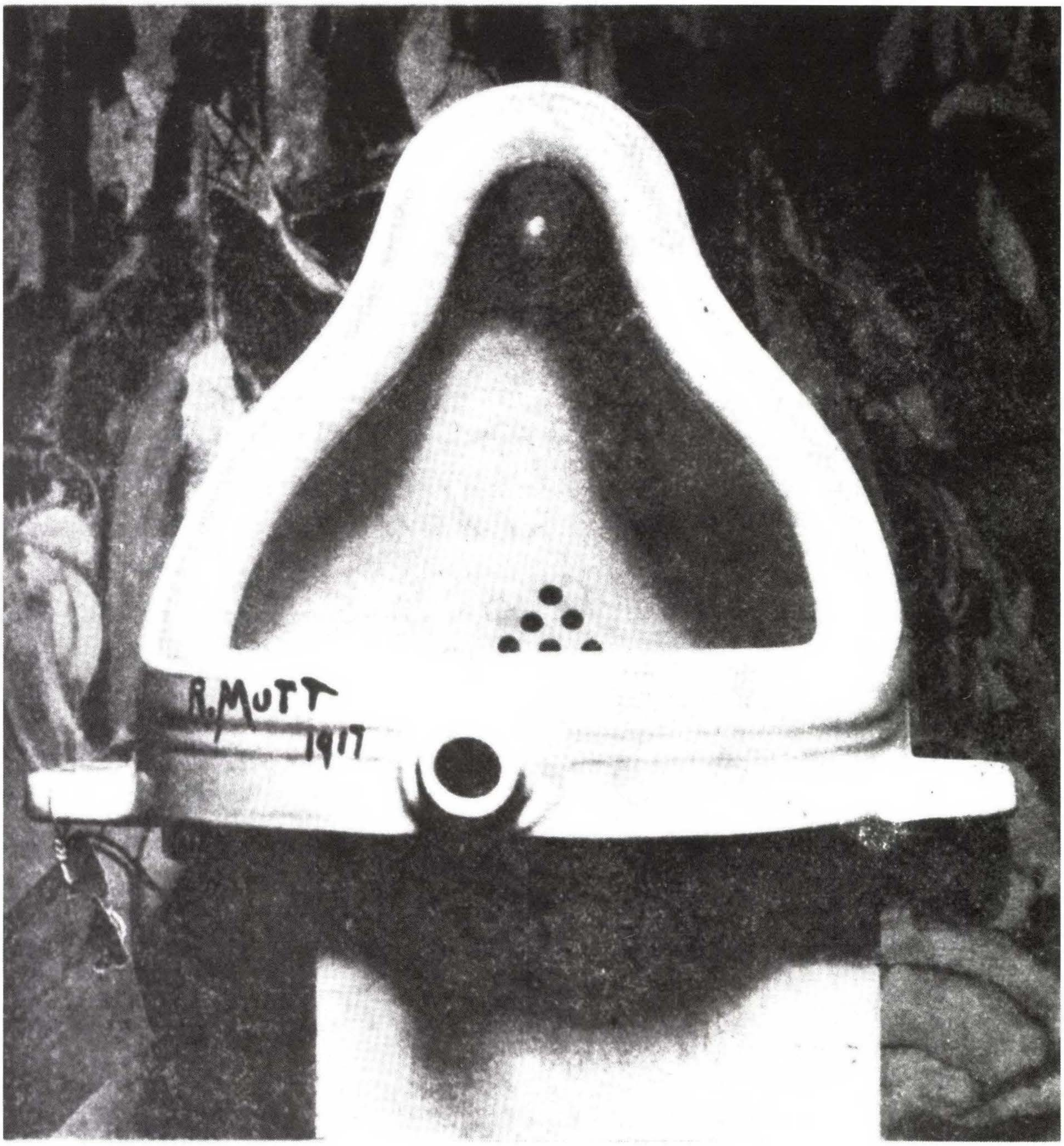


Figure 54. Marcel Duchamp. *The Fountain by R. Mutt*, from May 1917 edition of *Little Review* edited by Marcel Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roché, and Beatrice Wood. Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz. Photo print courtesy of Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Archive, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

In early 1913, Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912), a painting that made simultaneous reference to both Cubism and Futurism, was concurrently described as a masterpiece and an "explosion in a shingle factory." The painting was reproduced for sale in postcard form and featured as the sole illustration to appear on the menu for the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, Inc. March 8th Beefsteak Dinner for their "friends and enemies of the press." Large crowds had regularly gathered around the work as it was exhibited; more often than not, these spectators

were less interested in actively participating in an aesthetic situation than in a media event. "The rude descending a staircase (Rush hour at the subway)" and other caricatures of the painting had appeared in the press, and the *American Art News* had offered a prize to the individual who could locate the nude in the School of Paris piece.[5] In short, Duchamp's *Nude* had become both symbol of modernity and unchallengeable popular hit of the International Exhibition of Modern Art mounted at the 69th Regiment Armory in New York City, an event that is credited as having served as the American public's tumultuous introduction to the amorphous construct, "twentieth-century European modernism."

It should be noted that the reception of *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* during the 1913 Armory Show was not an art situation that Duchamp orchestrated. Unlike his friend and colleague Francis Picabia, who traveled to America for the exhibition's opening and actively participated in a well-staged dialogue with the mass media, Duchamp's appropriation into the event was dependent upon chance. The show included four works by Marcel Duchamp, five by Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and nine by Jacques Villon. The press, having had its curiosity whetted by the thought of an European avant-garde family, chose to reproduce photographs of the brothers "at home" (that is to say, as they participated in everyday life) in popular Sunday supplements. The public responded well to the promotional prompt and the stage for the subsequent reaction to the painting was artfully set.

Duchamp would eventually become the master of the constructed art situation and of the art of allowing himself to be positioned by others. He would be appropriated by Tristan Tzara into Dada and later by André Breton into Surrealism and, although he would never become a card-carrying member of either movement, he would come to serve as paradigm for both. Furthermore, Duchamp would leave behind a legacy that continues to deeply affect our waning century and which, barring unforeseen circumstances, promises to continue its impact on the next. In fact one could easily go so far as to insist that it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine the direction that the arts of our own period would have taken without his influence. He would serve as mentor to the composer John Cage (and through him to a new generation of artists including Ray Johnson, Allan Kaprow, and Dick Higgins); would deeply influence Merce Cunningham, Terry Atkinson and the Art-Language group, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg (the precursors to American Pop) and Claes Oldenburg, Richard Hamilton and the British Independent Group, Robert Morris and other Minimalists, the Situationist International, George Maciunas and other Fluxus people, among a host of others. I would posit that one cannot speak of eternal networks, process aesthetics, or any of the other art actions that maintain as their conceptual armature a *purported* insistence upon the inseparableness of art and life without hearing the echo of Duchamp's voice. It would be naive of us to assume, however, that he would have unconditionally approved of these contemporary manifestations of the Duchampian legacy. Aware of the danger of indiscriminate repetition, Duchamp "publicly" withdrew from the art world in 1923 (one decade after his triumph at the Armory Show) and devoted himself to chess.

Duchamp's overt references to chance procedure have left their indelible mark upon his disciples (for example, the integral role that chance plays in most forms of process art). His experiments with language have undeniably

influenced contemporary artists working with performance scores, visual poetry/language works, concept art, etc., as has (at least on the surface) his insistence upon the hegemony of ideas over normative aesthetic titillation. However, it is through his invention/implementation of the concept of the ready-made that he most deeply affected the contemporary arts. That such is the case is ironic in view of the fact that the ready-made is probably the least well understood of Duchamp's transactional activities.

In 1913, the same year that his *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* fortuitously became the pivotal symbol of the New York Armory Show, Duchamp fastened a bicycle wheel to a kitchen stool in order to enjoy watching it turn and, a few months later, added green and red dots to the horizon of a commercial print of a winter landscape and retitled the resulting piece *Pharmacy*. In 1914, he purchased a bottle-rack based on his personal response of *visual indifference* to the object. Deliberately chosen in a state of "complete anaesthesia," *Bottle Rack* fulfilled all requirements for what, in 1915, Duchamp would identify as the "ready-made." He would later distinguish between the ready-made, the readymade-aided, and the reciprocal ready-made. In the process, Duchamp provided a potentially dangerous *formula* for succeeding generations of art makers who profess alliance to so-called non-hierarchical "new aesthetic media."

While it is true that Duchamp's ready-mades liberated art making from the *re*presentation of nature at a point in time when the issue was of vital importance to the artists, the ready-mades were not about the aestheticization of everyday materials and mass produced objects. They served instead as initiators of art-centered situations—interactions that made direct reference to the fact that Art itself was a culturally specific, man-made construct. A brief discussion of *Fountain* (1917), one of Duchamp's most well-known ready-mades, and of its subsequent misinterpretation, will hopefully illustrate my contention.

In 1917, Duchamp anonymously submitted a urinal signed by one "R. Mutt" for inclusion in a supposed "unjuried" show mounted by the newly founded Society of Independent Artists in New York. *Fountain* was "shown" behind a curtain and Duchamp resigned in protest, having succeeded in testing the Society's charter. In 1963, Robert Morris produced an assemblage (which made use of everyday materials) in homage to Duchamp. One of Morris's historians writes:

> In certain instances, Duchamp's objects provided a scenario for Morris's theatrical games. *Fountain* (1963), a play on Duchamp's readymade of a urinal placed on its back, consists of an ordinary galvanized steel bucket hung at eye level. *Unlike Duchamp's inverted urinal, Morris's homage does not function as a static object* [emphasis mine]; inside the bucket, and well above the viewers line of vision, water noisily circulates through a pump. What might have been a silent pun on modernist history instead becomes an endless performance piece, a kind of aural *ballet mécanique*. [6]

What is implied in the above statement is quite simply that through his use of artistic privilege, Duchamp "signed" an everyday static object and, in the process, magically transformed it into Art; whereas Morris surpassed his mentor by appending theatricality, performance, and temporality to the process. Nothing could be further from the truth.

While Morris' *Fountain* functioned comfortably within a pre-ordained, sanctified artistic space and was, from its inception, intended to maintain its objectness, Duchamp's ready-made was deliberately intended to serve as mere

catalyst for a cultural interaction. To describe the 1917 *Fountain* as "a static object" is ludicrous, particularly in view of the fact that the piece was not completed until some time after Duchamp removed the urinal from the Society of Independent Artists' Exhibition. The "exhibition" of the object was but one increment in the collaborative *event* known as "the Richard Mutt Case." The specifics of how a particular art situation was activated are essential to our understanding of the piece. The event in question was the testing of the charter of the newly established Society of Independent Artists, a charter that Duchamp himself had been instrumental in composing. The urinal merely activated the interaction.

> They say any artist paying six dollars may exhibit. Mr. Richard Mutt sent in a fountain. Without discussion this article disappeared and was never exhibited. What were the grounds for refusing Mr. Mutt's fountain: 1. Some contended it was immoral, vulgar. 2. Others, it was plagiarism, a plain sheet of plumbing.

This statement appeared as the opening text of *The Blind Man, No 2* (Marcel Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roche, and Beatrice Wood, eds., New York, May 1917) opposite a beautifully printed photograph of *Fountain* by Alfred Stieglitz. It was through the publication of the little review that the completed piece was realized. Thus, the event is a collaboration between the editors, Stieglitz and others who contributed to the issue. It should be noted that the editors of *The Blind Man* attempted to publish the little magazine without making use of editorial censorship (any article was to be accepted with a contribution of four dollars)[7] and that the issue devoted to "The Richard Mutt Case: Buddha of the Bathroom" was not "marketed" through "normal" channels but was distributed by hand.

Robert Morris' 1963 *Fountain* is housed in a private collection. Duchamp's 1917 version is no longer extant. (Having served its intended purpose, it quietly disappeared.) There are, however, a number of subsequent editions of the object scattered throughout numerous collections. It could be argued that the later versions lack the *specific* transactional characteristics of the original. Duchamp was aware of this and, in yet another attempt to short-circuit our assumptions about the institution of art, issued the facsimiles as part of his self-professed "whoring period."

In 1953, Duchamp organized the exhibition, "Dada 1916-1923," at the Sidney Janis Gallery-in New York, and designed the exhibition catalogue which served as the poster for the show. It was printed on very thin paper and presented to the public at the opening as a crumpled ball of tissue. Included on the poster/exhibition catalogue is a manifesto by Tristan Tzara entitled "DADA vs ART" wherein the poet states:

> Dada tried to destroy not so much art as the idea one had of art, breaking down its rigid borders, lowering its imaginary heights—subjecting them to a dependence on man, to his power—humbling art, significantly making it take place and subordinating its value to pure movement which is also the movement of life.
>
> Was not Art (with a capital A) taking a privileged, not to say tyrannical position on the ladder of values, a position which made it sever all connections with human contingencies?

In 1965, on a Fluxus broadside, George Maciunas, the movement's[8] primary organizer, published a manifesto which attempted to distinguish between "ART" and "FLUXUS ART-AMUSEMENT."

ART

To justify artist's professional, parasitic and elite status in society, he must demonstrate artist's indispensability and exclusiveness, he must demonstrate the dependability of audience upon him, he must demonstrate that no one but the artist can do art.

Therefore, art must appear to be complex, pretentious, profound, serious, intellectual, inspired, skillful, significant, theatrical, it must appear to be valuable as commodity so as to provide the artist with an income.

To raise its value (artist's income and patrons' profit), art is made to appear rare, limited in quantity and therefore obtainable and accessible only to the social elite and institutions.

FLUXUS ART-AMUSEMENT

To establish artist's nonprofessional status in society, he must demonstrate artist's dispensability and inclusiveness, he must demonstrate the self-sufficiency of the audience, he must demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it.

Therefore, art-amusement must be simple, amusing, unpretentious, concerned with insignificances, require no skill or countless rehearsals, have no commodity or institutional value.

The value of art amusement must be lowered by making it unlimited, mass-produced, obtainable by all and eventually produced by all.

Fluxus art amusement is the rear-guard without any pretension or urge to participate in the competition of "one-upmanship" with the avant-garde. It strives for the monostructural and nontheatrical qualities of simple natural event, a game or a gag. It is the fusion of Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children's games and Duchamp.[9]

Most participants in Fluxus insist that Maciunas' manifestoes present his own perspective and, thus, are not true "Fluxus Manifestoes." None of the Fluxus people signed the above. That such should be the case is based, in part, on the fact that the statement outlines a kind of self-destruct mechanism directed not only at Art (with a capital A) but also at the myth of artistic privilege.[9] In homage to the late and talented impresario of Fluxus (the movement that is credited as having served as direct progenitor of contemporary Eternal Networks) we should keep in mind that having purportedly liberated ourselves from hierarchical definitions of *great Art*, we run the risk of being left with little other than *great Artists* and famous "signatures." To do less would simply not be keeping it honest. In his "Dada Manifesto 1918" Tzara claimed that "morality is an injection of chocolate into the veins of all men."[10] So too is art, it would seem, at least for its makers.

* * * * * *

1. Marcel Duchamp, cited in Hans Richter, *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1978, p. 89.
2. Tristan Tzara, "An Introduction to Dada," in Robert Motherwell, *The Dada Painters and Poets*, Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 402.
3. Ibid., p. 405.
4. Ibid., p. 403.
5. For an in-depth discussion of the International Exhibition of Modern Art, see Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, New York: the Joseph H. Hirschhorn Foundation, 1963. The winning entry for the *American Art News'* contest is entitled, "It's Only a Man" and is reproduced on p. 110.
6. Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989, p. 34. Despite his unfortunate misinterpretation of the transactional nature of Duchamp's ready-made, Berger's analysis of his subject is both intelligent and informed by the best intentions. In his introduction to the text, the author makes clear that his own perspective stands outside "formalism's aestheticization of the object." See "Introduction: Robert Morris Outside Art History," p. 5.
7. See 'I Shock Myself': Excerpts from the Autobiography of Beatrice Wood," in *Arts Magazine, Special Issue, New York Dada and the Arensberg Circle*, May 1977, LI: 9, p. 136.
8. I am fully aware that surviving members of the Fluxus community insist that Fluxus was not a movement. Dick Higgins,

for example, uses the term "tendency" in his attempts to distinguish Fluxus from earlier movements such as Dada and Surrealism. This is not a new strategy, however. In the late Teens and early Twenties, Tristan Tzara, Dada's primary impresario, professed a similar insistence that the World War I era movement was not a movement but a constellation of individuals. In fact, the term "tendency" appears in his "DADA vs ART" manifesto which was published in the 1953 Sidney Janis catalogue/poster:

> It should be noted-and this is a trait common to all *tendencies* [emphasis mine]—that the artistic means of expression lose, with Dada, their specific character. These means are interchangeable, they may be used in any form of art and moreover may employ incongruous elements—materials noble or looked down upon, verbal cliches, or cliches of old magazines, bromides, publicity slogans, refuse, etc.

Tzara also makes reference to Duchamp's experiments with chance procedure and to his discovery of the ready-made in the manifesto.

9. It is important to note that few of Maciunas' co-participants in Fluxus would have defended Art's privileged and "tyrannical position on the ladder of values." None the less, fewer still were able to liberate themselves from the assumption that the Artist's experience of the everyday is somehow more valuable, and thus deserving of attention, than similar experiences of "non-professionals."

10. Reproduced in Motherwell, p. 81.

* * * * * *



Figure 55. Guy Bleus, *In Quest of the Eternal Netland*, Belgium, 1993. Artists' Stamp.

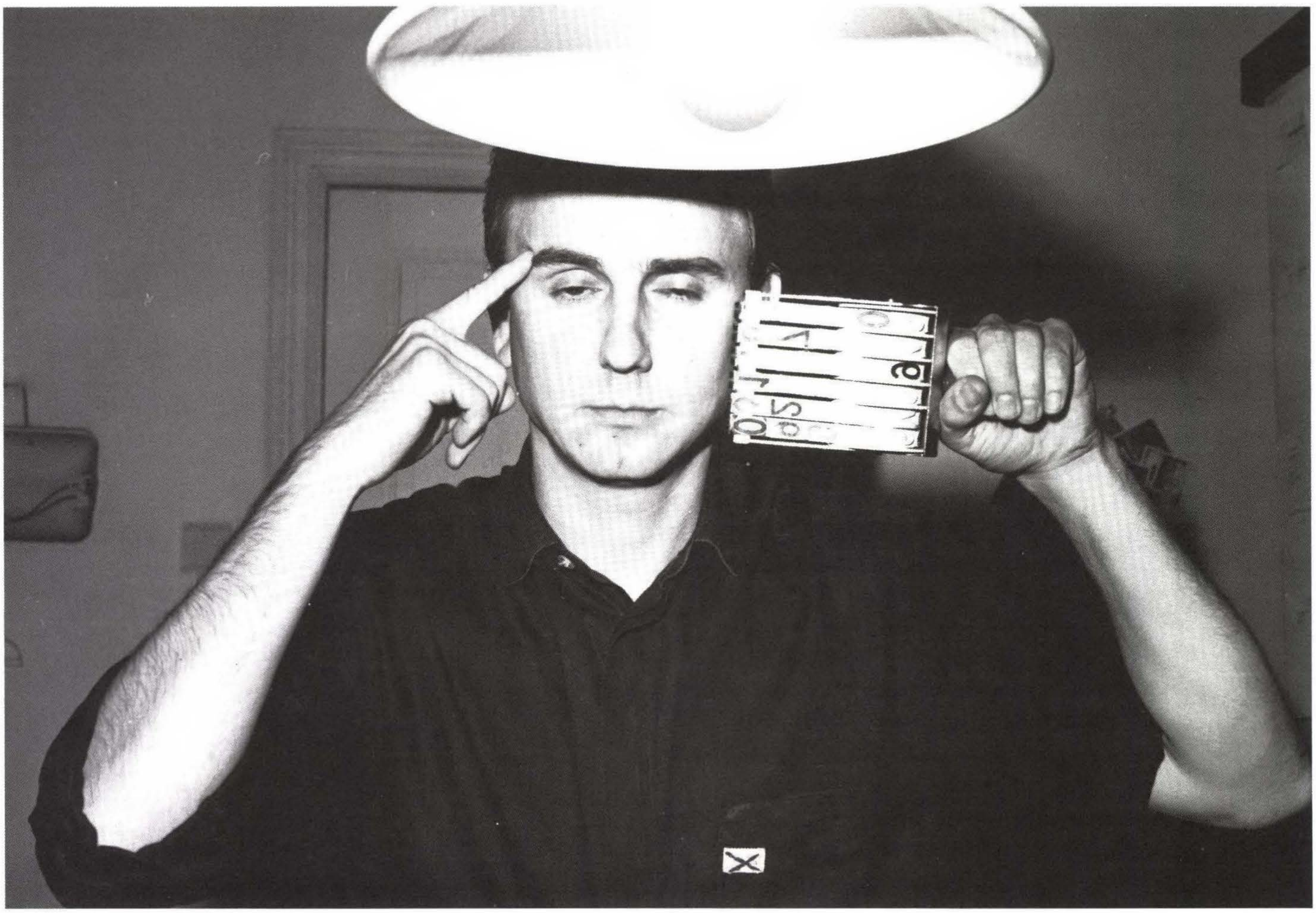


Figure 56. Guy Bleus, *How to Fight the Madness of Bureaucracy at the End of the Twentieth Century*, Belgium, 1981. Rubber Stamp Performance. Photograph by Hedwig Vaes.

CHAPTER 11

COMMUNICATION: 44 STATEMENTS

Guy Bleus

1. There was a *time* without Mail-Art. There will be a time without it.

2. The task of Mail-Art is to bring dysinformation into the information systems, discommunication into the communication systems, *emotion* into the logical systems.

3. The world is not the world. There are *different* networks of ideas about the world (in the minds of men/women and in minds' extensions).

4. From a holistic point of view, there are no Mail-Art objects, there are Mail-Art *relations*; differences that we notice by comparing things. Relations are thought-patterns.

5. The essential feature of Mail-Art is not imitation/mimesis (Plato), beauty (Kant), expression (Croce), form (Bell), signs (Goodman). It is communication. The notion "communication" is no more or less *mysterious* than the previous universals. It is the transfer of (aesthetic) information, the exchange of (aesthetic) meanings.

6. All "things" communicate. They cannot "not-communicate." This idea concerns objects not intended to communicate. We *communicate*—we can do no other.

7. The *meaning* of a Mail-Art tool becomes determined (or modified) by the use of a communication system. A postcard receives its meaning via the sending.

8. The efficiency of a Mail-Art message derives from its ability to *provoke* communication.

9. One aim of aesthetics is to construct a *value-system*, a logical model of taste to judge or condemn works of art.

10. Unconscious or not, mail-artists are not without aesthetic *preferences*. Yet, their individual aesthetic opinions don't have much influence on the communicative working of the Network.

11. *Aesthetics* is the theology of Art (Flam).

12. In principle, every Mail-Art work is unfinished. It is an aesthetic text asking for a *reply*. Every work starts a new process, a never-ending story.

13. Mail-Art is a movement without aesthetic manifestos. It doesn't maintain its unity and unanimity thanks to the existence of a bundle of principles or a constitution, but through the fact that there are no communicative prescriptions. Mail-artists always communicate, again and again. The keystone of Mail-Art is *reciprocity*.

14. Mail-Art is a *communication sculpture*.

15. Mail-Art is not an artistic island. It is a cultural *peninsula* of the socioeconomic continent. An appendix that could be called a consciousness of art in a non-poetic space.

16. "This work of art has two folds!" one said. Most Mail-Art works are FOLD, but this aspect has no influence on the quality of the information. Of course, it can injure the monetary value of a work. Mail-Art is dog-eared communication, *dog-ear-art*.

17. Nothing is new on our road to X. There are only relics, fetishes and simulacra. The *iconoclast* stops striking

matches...the temperature of which art catches fire and burns.

18. There is no art any more. There are only aesthetics: the aesthetic perception and experience of senders and receivers. The closed teleological system with intrinsic, artistic values is open. Only *contemplation* determines what is considered as an "aesthetic object." There are no real works of art; there are only objects that are observed differently, in a functional or non-functional, artistic or non-artistic way. With changing contexts (aesthetic or not).

19. Essentially, the aesthetic communication is more important than the objects of art. The *durability* of the communication-works does not matter. Their effect is in the moment. From this point of view communication archives are a contradiction.

20. Three years without "art": Art Strike 1990–1993. It's easier to kill the *causes* of art, the artists, than it is to ruin the idea. Eliminating the word "art" will not solve the problem. But it can indicate how some mail-artists think and feel...Can Mail-Art achieve a transvaluation of art?

21. Every system—and the Mail-Art system too—is remarkable and fascinating in the places where it *fails*. These shortcomings can teach us to avoid new stupidities and bring new insights.

22. *Conflicts* of values: What's more valuable, a healthy hundred-year-old oak or a painting of Picasso with a value of two million U.S. dollars? Burn the museums...Save the woods...Or vice versa, as we do today.

23. The ocean is big, blue and beautiful, not man-made, not an art. Yet, since the "Socle du Monde" of Manzoni, the whole earth is a *work of art*.

24. The aesthetic space of Mail-Art is "everywhere." The whole world has become a field of aesthetic action. The aesthetic time of Mail-Art is "always." Night or day, mail-artists are *permanently* sending and/or receiving.

25. In the 16th century it took twenty days to communicate from Rome to Paris. Today, the communication mania is permanently busy exploring the unknown. Nobody knows what is *important* or not. The aesthetic values (read "interests") become dictated by Rex Dollar, the King of Mass Communication.

26. The focus of Mail-Art is *not* the unilateral (one-way communication), but the bi- and multi-lateral communication. Nevertheless, mail-artists often "think" as traditional artists, but "act" as mail-artists, and vice-versa.

27. What often surprises me is that mail-artists aren't conscious of olfactory communication and don't give *olfactory* feedback. Because nasal Mail-Art offers a lot of new communicative possibilities...The message (the odour) is crystallized in the medium (the nose).

28. The postal Mail-Art game is not unlimited. The *repetition* of projects is not forever. The Mail-Art Redundancy becomes bigger and bigger according to the psychological outline: confusion-overload-surprise-new-unexpected-recognizable-familiar-known-boring-reiteration-superfluous-tautological. How to overcome this stalemate situation? By starting a new meta- or para-postal game?

29. It's hard to tell what is more important in Mail-Art: the analogical (non-verbal) or the digital (verbal) communication. If one doesn't know a little English, French or Spanish, one is communicatively *handicapped*. The hegemony of the American/English language is a disadvantage for the lesser known languages, but it is an

undeniable benefit for the international Mail-Art Network and is comparable with the pragmatic function of medieval Latin.

30. The grammatical mistakes, the corruption of the language, idiom-blunders, faults of linguistic feeling, etc., can lead to witty misunderstandings, but they don't really matter. Most mail-artists grasp these problems. They *understand* the message and that's what counts.

31. *Art-cliches*: Mail-Art is not an art because there is no art, there is only Money. Art has been dead a long time. A work of art isn't appreciated for its artistic values, but for its commercial or market value. The gallery-keepers and art critics, not artists, are the high priests of the Holy Art. The chaos between the means and purposes of art is complete.

32. Mail-Art tries to escape the Myth of the False Values, but not always successfully. Mail-Artist A can be considered a better artist than B, because A is wealthy and able to print multi-coloured postcards, posters, etc. Mail-artists *invest* "money" into their communication. Those without a piece of silver, let them first cast a stone.

33. Art has lost its provocative function. Some shade of it can be found in Mail-Art. There is no social *criticism* in art. Everything is good. All artists are good. There are no angry artists any longer.

34. Mail-Art means *decentralization* of art communication. The Mail-Art structure is a "comcon," a completely connected communication network. Everyone can write to every member and as much as she/he likes.

35. Deadline stress, failing information, frustrating messages, communication stress, fear of opening the envelopes, "am I included or not?" etc...Mail-Art is sometimes a real *psychological battle-field.*

36. Accidental or telepathic interchange and also *crossing* communication are typical occurrences in Mail-Art.

37. A bizarre aspect of Mail-Art communication is the *dichotomy* "anonymous"—"known." On the one hand, anonymity stimulates openness in the Mail Art Network. Sending intimate, very personal things or information to somebody you don't know (living at the other end of the world) is rather harmless. On the other hand, the communication is mostly amicable and true, although one often knows nothing else but the "name" or "pseudonym" of the other mail-artist.

38. The *sincerity* of Mail-Art communication is frequently caused by the anonymity, not knowing the person (his/her profession, his/her way of life, his/her personality, etc.) behind the name. Of course, the large network makes it structurally impossible to be close friends with all the mail-artists. Superficial communication is often a condition that helps maintain exacting contacts.

39. The continually growing number of artists within the Mail-Art group causes less available time for each mail-artist. The Mail-Art neophyte does not always receive the attention he/she expects and will have to fight to get enough acknowledgment in the *temple* of "reciprocal" communication. The larger the Mail-Art Network, the more impersonal. Don't blame the mail-artists! Blame the system! Does Mail-Art have masonic blues?

40. Most mail-artists are individualists and don't like to be called "members." The Mail-Art Network can be called "human" to the extent that its members *acknowledge* one another.

41. Man is by nature a political animal (Aristotle). In this sense, Mail-Art incarnates a political movement, a social activity, a value-system. Without solidarity or empathy, Mail-Art is an angel with *burning* wings.

42. *Words* fail.

43. Finally, Art or Mail-Art is not important. What we need is a *coherent* communication model of what we want: power, riches, glory and destruction; and/or mutual respect, social justice, ecological maintenance and well-being.

44. Only *owls and oaks* can save us.

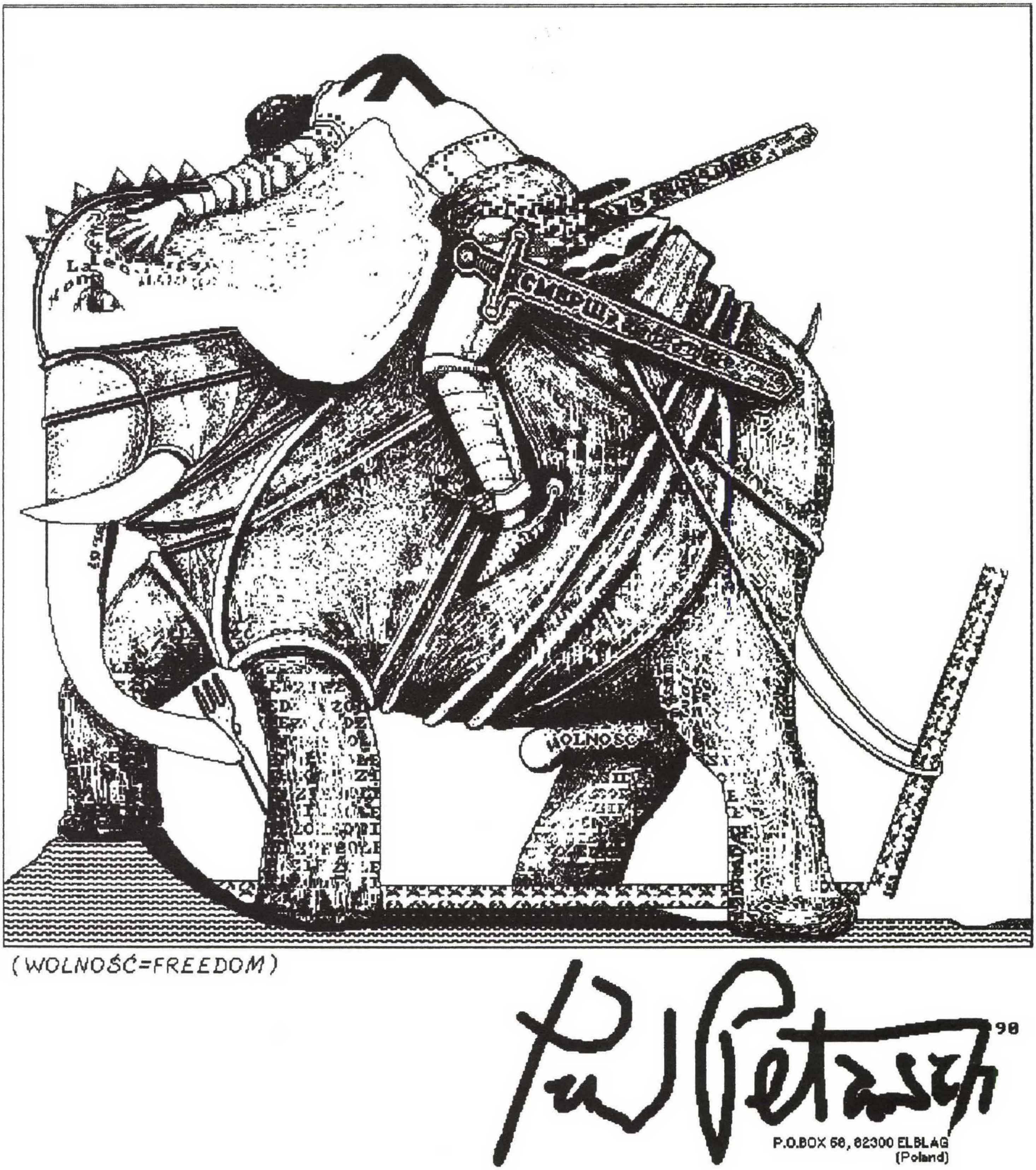


Figure 57. Pawel Petasz, *Freedom*, Poland, 1990. Computer Print.

CHAPTER 12

MAILED ART IN POLAND

Pawel Petasz

Before the term "mail art" came to be known in Poland as the name of an international communication genre, there were conceptual Polish artists such as Anastazy Wisniewski, Leszek Przyjemski, Zofia Kulik, Przemyslaw Kwiek and Andrzej Partum[1] who were working during the 1960s and early 1970s. These artists and others were active in many creative genres including PhotoMedium and Contextual art.[2] What differentiated these mail exchanges from western mail art was twofold: first, Polish mail art exchanges were primarily in-country, and second, the major purpose of these exchanges was to create art that challenged or circumvented the restrictive ideology and regulations of the Polish people's art scene. The marginal character of these postal exchanges was balanced between an unofficial or illegal status. Furthermore, the concepts and purposes for Polish mail art exchanges were privately shared and understood from a localized Polish perspective.[3]

Under Communist rule, all duplicating and printing services were strictly controlled and not available for private or public usage. Student galleries and local cultural centers, however, were not censored as severely and often became a conduit for the exchange of independent texts—concrete and visual poetry, scripts or edited documentation. Quite often, a show or an event scheduled by a local art center would be a pretext for printing and distributing material that would otherwise be severely censored. A local gallery could not obtain a censor's permission to print books, but they were allowed to print show catalogues in editions of 100 copies. The content of these programs or catalogues had to be passed with a censor present, but such visitations were more relaxed and discussion could be bargained over a vodka. Readers may find it hard to imagine mature people playing such silly games with words and compromises, and so an anecdote may help to illustrate the spirit of these times.

In 1974, I was appointed director of a municipal art center in Elblag. I decided to mail out an art calendar for the art center which would double as an announcement of my new position there. I made a paste-up for the calendar, and the art center applied for permission to create it.[4] On the first visit, the censor found the calendar ineligible for discussion. It was argued that the calendar and not the art would have to be discussed by a top authority. I decided to remake the paste-up into a fake show poster with room enough at the top of the poster to be cut off so the word "calendar" could be added later with a rubber stamp. Not having a clearly established date for the calendar, I had to simply print, "In December." But the censors didn't like my usage of "December" because that month was associated with worker protests in Gdansk in 1970. They forced me to use the number 12 in place of December. I had to reconstruct the calendar a third time because the photograph of our art center, now located in a reconstructed former church, revealed a small cross visible on the back roof. I agreed to paint a cloud over the cross. Eventually, my calendar was printed, but with a variety of material collaged to conceal visual information I never intended to be interpreted as signifiers of anti-state content. For example, there was a snapshot of a prominent slogan, "We Are Building Our Fair Future," that was placed over heavily barred windows. The

censor didn't understand my collage and for the price of removing a cross from my work, my calendar was printed and the intended subversive content remained.

I learned about mail art accidentally in 1975.[5] It was very exciting to suddenly have a chance to participate in a world in which the Iron Curtain didn't exist. All mail restrictions in Poland were shamefully hidden from the people. Oddly, unlike most Communistic changes to Poland, there was never any "People's Post" introduced in Poland. The general postal regulations continued unchanged from the refreshingly cosmopolitan, open years of the 1930s. Problems began to occur when government spy hunters infiltrated the postal system, where they remained in the background of everything until the Spring of 1989. In the 1970s it wasn't a crime to receive letters from abroad, but if you received too many, a logical excuse was needed.[6]

In the late 1970s, government spy hunters visited me several times. Since I wasn't considered dangerous, these visits were friendly ones and a bottle of vodka was brought along to be shared with me. Politely, the intelligence agents would ask me to make a friendly gift of a valuable book or record that might be in sight. On one visitation, I was told by the intelligentsia to leave my studio and go after something. I don't know what they wanted to do or why they asked me to leave, but I suspect they were going to "bug" my studio, although upon returning I searched and found no listening devices. My next studio was never officially searched, although I once found my cat outside the studio after I'd left it inside.

I tried to appear ignorant of any wrongdoing. I would try to cover up any suspicious mail, "corrected" works, or tried omitting any real Polish underground contacts. I avoided underground contacts because I didn't want to have anything to tell the authorities, no matter how they tried to induce "cooperation." But there was another reason, on the margin, that most of the underground activity was merely a provocation. The authorities would often instigate trouble for the sake of keeping their jobs. They would fabricate reports, closed cases, etc. I will not elaborate on the matter here, but Communism didn't die in Poland because some underground fought it. The state was so omnipotent and present in everything that the real underground, real secret activity, was almost impossible. It was always either inspired or kept by security police, as a farmer keeps pigs at his farm, feeds them, lets them reproduce and kills one from time to time.

Repression in Poland, as compared to Chile or Russia, was never especially severe. Still, oppression in Poland was present everywhere in the form of a grey, hopeless reality with no place to move or do as one wished. Instead, there were limitations on our consumption and cultural freedom accompanied by overwhelming propaganda; that, "Men—this is it, the working class paradise, and it is going to be a greater paradise very soon!" Everything in our culture was upside down, white was black, and while you knew this wasn't true, the TV, newspapers, and slogans left no escape; white *IS* black! This was the horror!

Visits by spy hunters ceased in the 1980s, although in 1985 I was called to visit the secret police headquarters, where I was offered a passport if I would accept a position as an agent. I began to suspect that a center for mail art investigations were being run by the intelligentsia in my hometown, Elblag. This suspicion is based on several facts. Twice I found correspondence from other Polish mail artists addressed to other, far-away towns mixed incorrectly with my own post office box mail. Another time I was called to the militia station and confronted with a large pack of my recent mailings. They informed me that my mail had been stolen from the post office and rescued during a search at a suspect's home. I was to sign for the

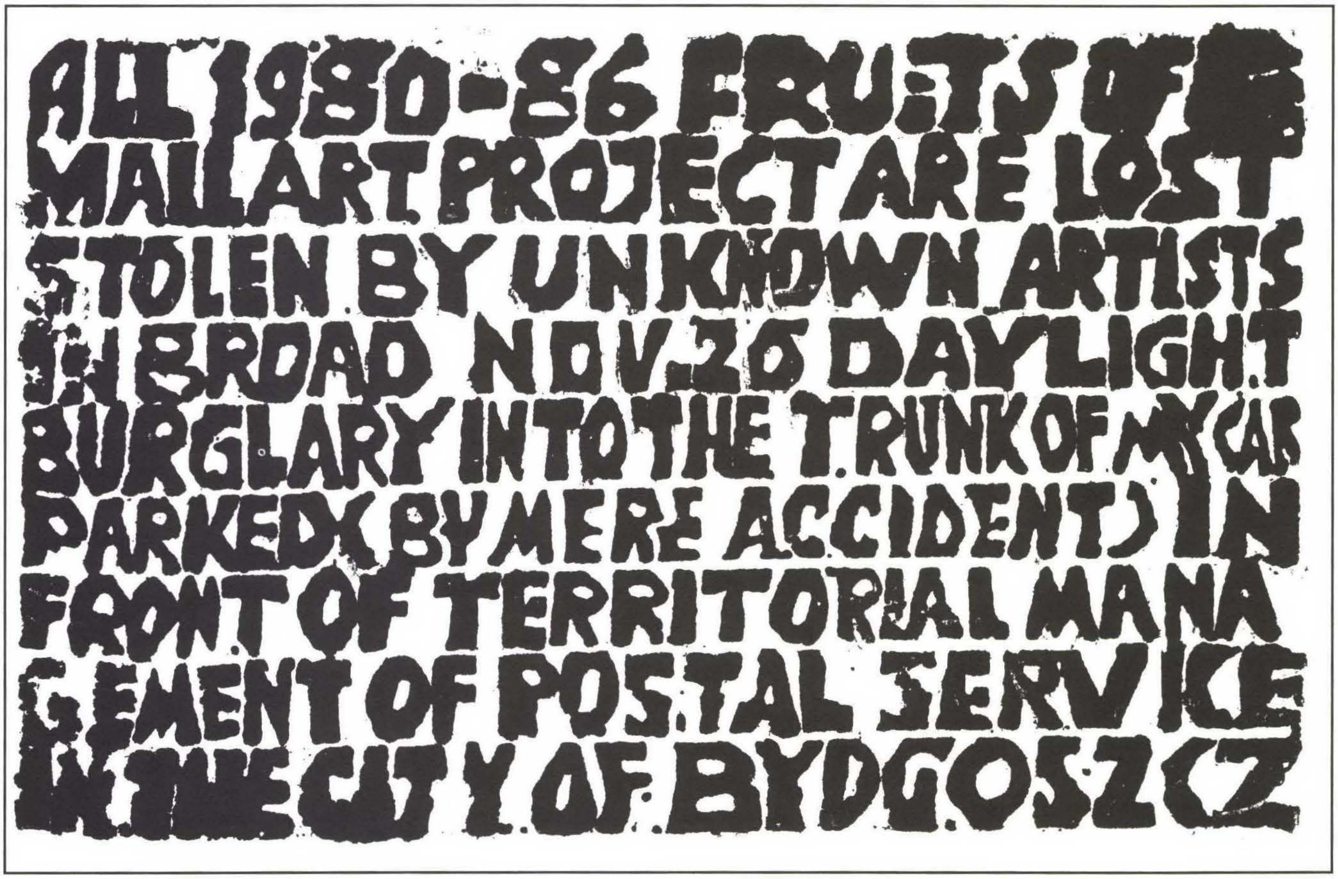


Figure 58. Pawel Petasz, *Untitled*, Poland, 1987, Rubber–stamped Message. The notice above appeared inside an envelope addressed to the editor. Petasz folded and sealed the envelope on three sides with machine stitching.

mail stating that I recognized the letters as my own correspondence. They let me have some of the "stolen" mail but kept the rest as proof against the criminal. This encounter was my closest brush with conviction by the authorities.

After the martial law issued by former President Jaruzelski, it became obvious to the Polish people that they couldn't live under Communism any longer. Communists could no longer lie to us about a bright, happy, future in which their propaganda was portrayed as a lesser evil compared to the Soviet Union. It was no longer a crime to express discontent with Communism, as long as it wasn't a conspiracy. Still, the possession of a typewriter and a few leaflets was enough to arouse suspicion. The militarized post offices were instructed to pay attention to the "language of stamps"[7] and demanded that recycled envelopes must not be mailed abroad because recycling parodied the poor economic situation within Poland. In the beginning of martial law, letters were to remain open and always received a rubber stamped impression which read "censored" or "not censored."

The overbearing authority of the postal service exploited the people, and mail theft was common. There were methods used to break up communication between senders and recipients by failing to deliver correspondence. My mail was being constantly checked, and it was customary to find everything sorted and bundled by country; one day the mail would arrive exclusively from East Block countries, next day, the USA. The envelopes, which were torn open, were usually placed in sealed plastic bags rubber-stamped "received damaged." Robbery was common, as investigators

frequently searched foreign mail for money or valuable items. Such mail was purposely delayed, or the delivery was so uncertain that any crimes committed were impossible to ascertain. The international *Commonpress*[8] collaborations, which I started in 1978, were impossible to coordinate because of constant postal interference.

I had no control over anything I mailed or received by post, but after the martial law controls were suspended I would either fold or sew my handmade paper envelopes with a sewing machine. The sewn mail was very difficult to open or unfold for photocopying by censors. The ostentatious appearance of these envelopes was provocative, yet this mail usually passed through. Using a variety of handmade paper, I purposely kept all of my mailings thick and coarse in appearance. The strategy proved successful for several years. When I needed to mail something that couldn't be included in the sewn envelopes, the material was nearly always lost, registered or not.

Mail art was never respected by the official artists and art critics of Poland.[9] The number of mail artists were always small, fewer than twenty, and primarily included H. Bzdok, T. Schulz, A. Dudek-Durer, R. Rupocinski, A. Dudek, A. Kirko, W. Ropiecki, and P. Rogalski. The mail art network was useful, however, as one of many information holes punched through the Iron Curtain. Mail art itself probably had little effect in breaking down Communist oppression. In a larger sense, however, mail art helped to free Polish artists from a feeling of rejection by others in the world.

At present, there are problems that have dampened my optimism that Polish artists will once again be global citizens in the arts. In December 1988, Piotr Rogalski organized a mail art show for a popular teenage newsstand magazine, *Moj Swiat.* The article encouraged an overflow of mail art exchanges within Poland, but the interest arrived too late. Poland's tragic economic inflation continually increases postal rates, and it is unlikely that the mail art fad can be sustained under these conditions. Furthermore, there isn't evidence of any clear ideology that is being expressed by artists within Poland. We have been accustomed to fight against, and not for. What shall we fight for? Wealth? Yes, we want wealth, but to want it is a shame in the modern tradition. Shall the alternative art cry resound for wealth when it is supposed to fight for the survival of elephants and whales? There is no conclusion to our situation in Poland. Everything is in rapid transition, and nothing makes any sense. While mail art in Poland has helped us to break the feeling of past rejection by the world, our future remains uncertain, as do mail art activities that may help us evolve in a positive direction of involvement and influence in the world today.

* * * * * *

1. Wisniewski, Przyjemski, Kulik, Kwiek and Partum were Polish artists whose activities involved some mailing strategies, but which were never designated by each artist as "mail art." Anastazy Wisniewski was active in performance art, environmental art, and bookworks. Wisniewski often presented Communist rituals, celebrations, decorations, slogans and documents in an absurd, hidden context. Leszek Przyjemski, originally from Anastazy Wisniewski's group, later developed concepts into an international character, e.g. The Museum of Hysterics. Zofia Kulik and Przemyslaw Kwiek tried to organize a variety of alternative art events within Poland and succeeded in forming an unofficial art center, The Workshop of Art Creation, Distribution and Documentation. Both Kulik and Kwiek referred to their mailing activities as "Rozsylki," to send, spread out messages. Andrzej Partum, concrete poet, editor and organizer of independent art events, also carefully omitted the mail-art label from his work. (Brief references to these Polish artists and their activities were given by Pawel Petasz in a letter to Chuck Welch dated October, 1990.)
2. PhotoMedium Art is performance-connected photography with a conceptual-sociological background. Oftentimes, PhotoMedium artists used snapshots and film and presented them in a non-documented series that looked somewhat like Muybridge's pioneering photographs of people and animals frozen in motion. (Definitions as described in a letter to Chuck Welch from Pawel Petasz.) Contextual Art is sometimes referred to in Poland as "meta sztuka" or "meta-art." The terms apply to intellectuals or art critics who declare their theoretical art texts to be an artform. These

didactic texts were generally self-edited and self-distributed by mail. Pawel Petasz stated, "This was a very nice idea, but a bit boring and so these theoreticians created 'contextual art' so that anything could be art or not, depending on a context or situation." (Pawel Petasz in a letter to Chuck Welch dated October 1990).
3. For readers interested in pursuing further information about contemporary art and artists in Poland write to Centrum Sztuki Wspolczesnej (Contemporary Art Center), Director, Zamek Ujazdowski, Aleje Ujazdowskie 6, Warsaw, Poland. Or write to SASI (Other Artists Association), P.O. Box 2, 05092 Komianki, Poland. There are many texts pertaining to contemporary Polish art, but the editions are usually small and sometimes difficult to locate.
4. In the case of calendars, a letter of permission was required for approval from the main censor's office. The procedure was that you had to go to a printer with an official letter of commission from an institution and not an individual. The censor's letter of permission would describe in detail the printing job and number of copies allowed. After the copy paste-up, the censor would rubber stamp approval on the back of each page. This procedure was possibly followed to prevent the designation of forbidden anniversaries, cancelled holidays, etc.
5. I have a catalogue for a Polish mail art show organized in 1974 by the West German mail artist and neo-Dadaist Klaus Groh. The small, gallery mail art show was entitled, The Exhibition of the INFO group.
6. In the early 1950s, receiving letters from abroad was a crime.
7. Although this surprised me, I recall reading in a Sunday paper that such strategies did exist as something between semaphore alphabet and lovers' code: a stamp in the right corner equals "I love you."
8. Note by Chuck Welch: *Cmmonpress Magazine*, a democratic, open forum founded in December, 1977. *Commonpress* encouraged an open, "floating" editorship to anyone assuming responsibility to print and distribute copies.
9. Mail art was never respected in Poland. This is a fact that could be attributed to the simple context in which mail is regarded. The Polish language doesn't tolerate common words for uncommon activities. Mail is too simple, Art isn't. In Polish, for example, a record player could be simply expressed as "nagrywacz," but this is too simple a word for such a complicated device. So there are words taken from other cultures, like "magnetofon," "gramofon" or "magnetowid," although these words are not used in this meaning there. In a more complicated, serious tone, a producer would call it something better: "urzadzenie magnetofonowe" (a magnetofon device). "Mail art?" This doesn't sound serious at all!

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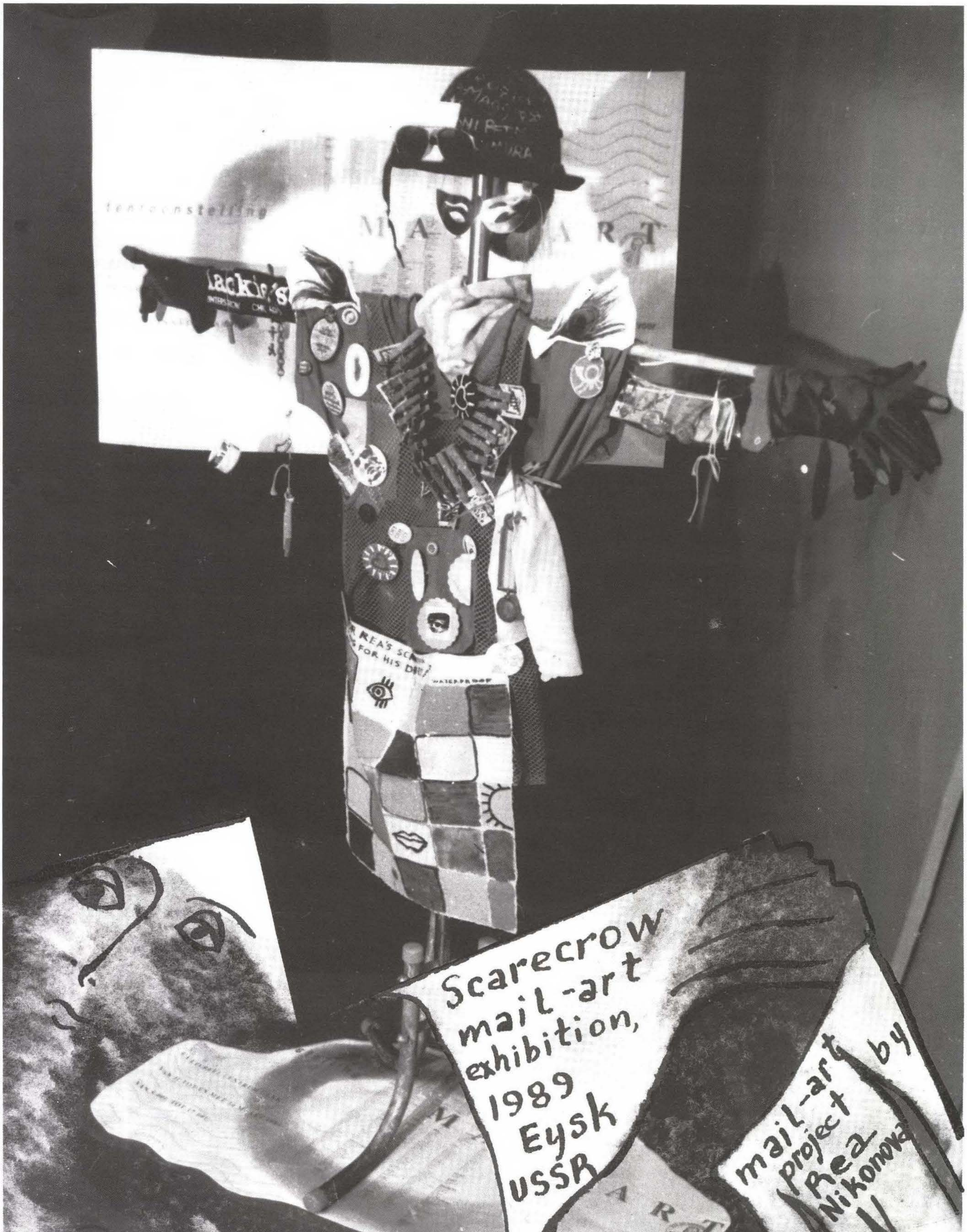


Figure 59. Rea Nikonova, *Scare-Crow Mail-art Exhibition*, Russia, 1989. Photograph by Serge Segay.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 13

MAIL ART IN THE U.S.S.R.

Rea Nikonova

With glasnost, the Soviet nation removed Communism's Little Red Riding Hood with a balletic gesture. Meanwhile, the military held theatrical meetings, chanting in unison about weak-minded leaders. Coming through the sewage hatchways, monarchists in full uniform sat confidently in broken, three-legged armchairs, sculpting, modeling their plasticine white horses to be ridden into the Kremlin. Russia, choking from the smoke of "roasted facts," allowed foreigners to roam about the country with microphones; dissidents gave interviews, emigres published their books in Moscow and Soviet maestros left the country in droves.

The Soviet government's most favored organization, the KGB, stood, face strained yet smiling, while it solemnly announced its willingness to shake the hand of every human killed or tortured on its account. With this announcement, a third of the KGB staff traveled abroad as representatives of dissident circles.

With these tumultuous beginnings of glasnost and perestroika, mail art began to emerge within Russia. The beginning of Soviet mail art can be traced to these political events, but in 1985, the international "Experimental Art Exhibition" in Budapest had an equally profound effect. That exhibition, sponsored October 21–November 21, 1985 by the Young Artists Club of Budapest, mailed invitations that Serge Segay (my husband) and I accidentally received. Having entered the show, our mail artwork, names and address appeared in the Hungarian catalogue on pp. 165–166. Soon thereafter, the mail artists Ninad Bogdanovich (Yugoslavia), Daniel Mailet (New Caledony) and Harley Francis (USA) wrote to us.

From that time onward, Serge and I mailed thousands of original mail artworks each year, a time when Xeroxing copies was illegal and conviction often led to imprisonment.

Serge and I often sent our mail artworks to complete strangers, and in reply we received Xerox copies of participants in mail art shows. Amidst the in-coming mail, art of beauty and originality arrived daily and was included in the exhibition Mail Art: The Artists from 25 Countries which we organized January 1989 in Yeisk. This was the first mail art exhibition in the U.S.S.R. Prior to our Yeisk mail art show, I sent a few mail art bulletins about my project "Write Yourself." The project drew seventeen participants from eleven countries. All these mailed artworks were included in the Yeisk mail art exhibition.

The Yeisk mail art exhibition included work by 105 artists from twenty-five countries (Fig. 60). Serge personally guarded the works and talked to the press. As for me, I played the role of show guide. With the help of the Yeisk Museum, a placard was printed for the exhibition, but the catalog had to be ordered privately, and then be "improved." We mailed all the documentation with our personal funds, Yeisk Art School provided the space, and the Museum kindly agreed to finance most of the show. TV journalists from our regional center, Krasnodar, arrived at the show, interviewed Serge, and shot a video clip that was broadcast in Krasnodar.

All of this activity inspired me to create a new mail art project I entitled "Scare-Crow." I advertised "Scare-Crow" in many bulletins and mail art notices and responses came from ninety-five participants living in twenty-three countries. The exhibition took place in the summer of 1989 (Fig. 59). Afterwards. I mailed a placard and several photos of the exposition to all of the participants. Due to the peculiarity of our postal service, Serge and I had to mail the documentation package as often as three times to some participants. We also involved third parties to assure delivery.

We sent the mail art exhibition Mail Art The Artists from 25 Countries traveling around the U.S.S.R., and to the Urals



Figure 60. Serge Segay, *Mail Art: The Artists from 25 Countries*, Russia, 1989. The bold blockprint exhibition poster announces the former Soviet Union's first international mail art exhibition. Presented at the Yeisk Art School in January 1989, Serge Segay and his wife Rea Nikonova organized the show, which proved to be a catalyst for mail art activity in the Soviet Union.

(Sverdlovsk), where it was such a success that a mail art club was created there. Further travels of the exhibition around the Urals (in Perm) also encountered success. A few Leningrad and Vladivostok residents who saw the exhibition in Perm asked us to show it in their cities, but we couldn't guarantee security of the works or any type of certification. Hence, we vetoed the continuation of our exhibition's voyage.

In Yeisk, Serge published the first mail art brochure in the U.S.S.R. (Fig. 61). This document included reproductions of Ruggero Maggi's works with mail art by other artists. In the summer of 1990 we planned two important exhibitions: John Held's (USA) stamp collection and the first international exhibition of visual poetry in the Soviet Union.

All of these exhibitions and activities became possible with the advent of "glasnost." Government agencies that previously incarcerated artists suddenly began signing release forms for the publication of posters. But these authorities



Figure 61. Serge Segay, *Mail Art*, Russia, 1989. Pamphlet.

didn't necessarily love the art they once hated. In the USSR, government and art were altogether incompatible.

The KGB took great interest in mail art and began opening every one of our international letters. An unsophisticated-looking stamp, "Forwarded Damaged," was placed on each of our torn and opened letters. Our letters took three to four months to arrive, disappeared by the dozens, or were returned without reason. Serge and I knew for some time that we were taking great risks with our art activities.

(Figures 62–63) When Serge and I went into mail art we were already active artists and poets. We had edited two *samizdat*[1] avant-garde journals, hundreds of unpublished books, collections, articles, textbooks, thousands of poems, paintings, drawings and unofficial poetic recitals for Leningrad audiences. We collaborated in the performance group, Transfuturists, (Nikonova, Segay, Konstrictor, Nik). Serge and I participated in unofficial art exhibitions in Leningrad and Sverdlovsk and edited a journal, *Transponans*. This publication was considered a model avant-garde journal in the nation and was the only journal which dealt with the subject of visual and action poetry in the USSR.

Transponans was published from 1979–1986 in a time now called "the era of stagnation." *Transponans* was a risky, non-commercial venture that we distributed free. There were basic ideas of *Transponans* that sharply distinguished it from the sea of Soviet *samizdat* publications of that time. We strove towards originality in design; every issue had three formats, was handmade, and vaguely resembled an airplane with outstretched wings. *Transponans* was a theoretical elaboration of complex literary and pictorial constructions. The source of our publication could be traced to the early Russian avant-garde, a tradition largely unknown to many Soviet literary

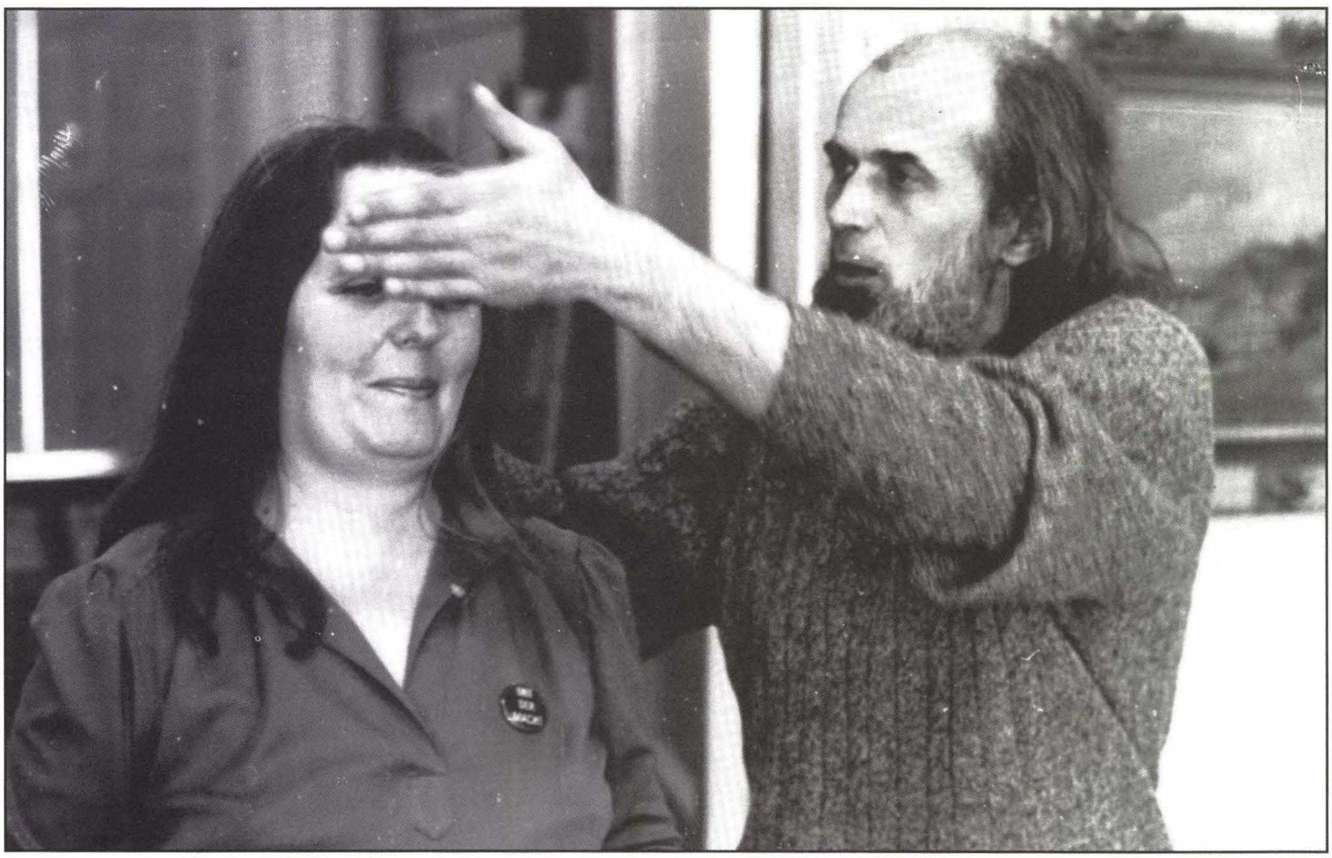


Figure 62. Rea Nikonova and Serge Segay, *Spirit Netlink Performance*, Russia, 1992. In collaboration with Crackerjack Kid, Nikonova and Segay organized a Russian Congress of the 1992 Netshaker Harmonic Divergence. The two hour event was held March 22 in the Yeisk Museum where activities included a music concert by American composer Janecek, a poetry reading, and an exhibition of bookworks by Chuck Welch, Miekal And, Liz Was, John Held, and Crag Hill. Later, Nikonova wrote an account of the activities for the Moscow newspaper *Humanitarian Fund*.

experts and nonconformist artists. The independent style of its editors brought *Transponans* a high reputation, even among its enemies.

Opponents to *Transponans* were not only from the conservative field (that of the realists, acmeists,[2] absurdists, etc.—mostly from Leningrad), but also from the field of "innovators" or Moscow conceptualists, socialist artists and others. Residents of capitals, accustomed to patronizing the provincials, could not bear the thought that *Transponans* didn't need patronage. The journal was already fit to supply ideas and information to anyone.

Serge's long-standing interest in the Russian avant-garde gave readers of *Transponans* a lot of rare and valuable information. Publications were included in the journal and there were translations as well. One of the issues of *Transponans* included the manifestos of Michele Perfetti, Paulo Bruscky and others.[3] Separate, special issues of the periodical were dedicated to vacuum, pictorial and action poetry or to conceptualism. In the period of nine years, thirty-six issues were produced.

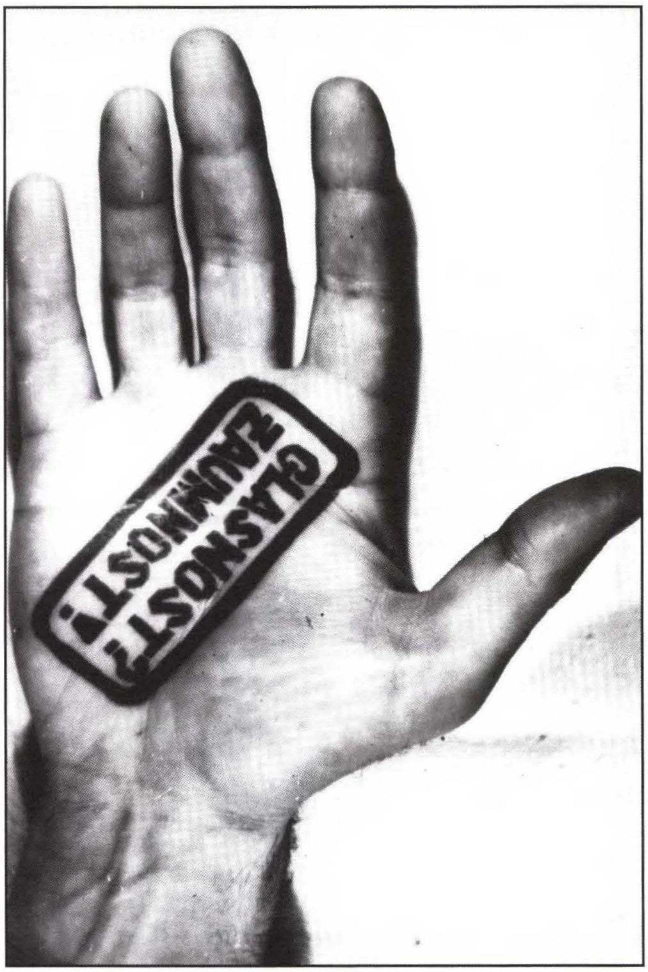


Figure 63. Serge Segay, *Spirit Netlink Performance*, Russia, 1992. A wet rubber–stamped "spirit impression" transferred by Serge Segay's hand to Rea Nikonova's forehead as pictured in Figure 62.

Glasnost completely destroyed many *samizdat* journals and triggered the creation of new ones. Many *samizdat* artists were somewhat at a loss because of the changes glasnost brought. Many irretrievably flung themselves through the opened doors of commercialism and some carried on with their usual work, unwanted by anyone and unable to find a new orientation.

Like many of the *samizdat* artists, Serge and I lost interest in continuing the production of *Transponans*. The journal had lost its aspect of risk, urgency and timeliness. Before glasnost, our publication was a dangerous venture that required large efforts to acquire art materials and technical tools for printing. Copier paper and paints, for instance, had to be shipped from Leningrad and Moscow. Still, glasnost brought to us the necessity of new ventures. Mail art became this venture!

At the height of glasnost, editors of Russia's most prestigious fine art journal, *Iskusstvo,* offered its pages to the avant-gardists. It was because of this opening that a lengthy mail art story by Serge appeared in *Iskusstvo's* tenth issue of 1989. Included were colored reproductions of mail art from the West. After the article appeared, many Soviet artists took an interest in mail art. Lithuania held two large-scale exhibitions, organized by Jonas Nekrasius.[4] Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and Sverdlovsk also planned mail art exhibitions.[5]

Repressions? None whatsoever! Only a perpetual, irksome guardianship and an occasional roundup whenever you poked your nose too far. The guardians are ubiquitous—workers of the police muse who stretch out a cold paw of "fraternal" aid as they smile warmly with poisonous lips. They are everywhere: in the basements of "dissidents," at embassy receptions, at meetings with "in-coming" foreigners. It is impossible to rid oneself of a sensation of binding "cooperation."

Serge's and my war with the postal service has been a victory of sorts; receiving one letter instead of ten, five months after each letter is mailed. Our victory is the joy of discovering that our letters have reached the addressee. All of this would be humorous were it not so sad!

Only registered mail reaches the addressee from our province. But where can a Soviet person get money to send by registered mail? There is only one solution—to deny oneself everything: food, clothing, house repairs, celebrations, and more. In spite of all, the government functions like a gigantic concentration camp. One sends priceless letters beyond the border and some get through. Occasionally, we get an answer from the West with a Xerox copy of mail art show participants. We find our nation listed with a few participants. We realize that this slot for Soviet mail art was empty for a very long time and now, it is finally filled. In contrast to H.R. Fricker's slogan encouraging "mail art tourism" is our enormous country, the motherland of mail art stillness. It seems to me that mail art in Russia has a future, but in the past it was directly tied to the politics of glasnost.

Serge and I live in the Krasnodar region—the Vandei of perestroika. Pluralism, glasnost and other hearths of life have not existed in our region. We live amidst the collective slaves who chew six letters of the only word, "Hurray!"

If no civil war or pogroms occur, if there isn't famine, if everything is just the opposite and heaven on earth will come about, we will find paints, brushes, paper, and Xerox machines in our stores, the international mailing prices will be substantially lowered, the free market will provide a few Western art magazines, the art exhibitions taking place mostly in Moscow will be shown on television, and the capital won't be mere sites for the sale of paintings. If all of this happens, then I see the future of Russian mail art in merry colors.

The Russian people are communicative. Among other things, they will quickly learn English when it is truly allowed; when dictionaries are available in our stores we will be happy! One can only hope to stay alive until these heavenly times arrive. With pride we will continue to send our invitations to visual poets of the world for an international exhibition of visual poetry at Yeisk. Without waiting for the heavenly conditions to arrive, Serge and I continue working under difficult conditions, for we realize that art continues against all obstacles.

* * * * * *

1. *Samizdat* is a form of free existence, without censors, of Russian art from the 1960s to the 1980s. Poets often used typewriters to create small editions of five to forty copies for themselves and friends. The authorities repressed anybody making or reading these books." (Quotation from Rea Nikonova in a letter to Chuck Welch dated October 5, 1990).
2. *Acmeists* were a group of Russian poets from the early twentieth century whose work closely resembled realism and romanticism. Members included the famous Russian poets Anna Achmatova, Osip Mandelstam, and Nicolaj Gumilev. The Acmeists have many imitators in Leningrad today largely because of the influence of Anna Achmatova who lived many years." (Ibid.).
3. Michele Perfetti and Paulo Bruscky: Perfetti is an Italian performance artist and pioneering mail artist who organized many visual poetry shows and publications. Paulo Bruscky is a Brazilian visual poet and mail artist who, with Daniel Santiago, organized the government censored International Exhibition of Mail Art in Recife, Brazil, August 1976. Serge Segay, upon finding Perfetti and Bruscky's manifestos in the Polish magazine *Stucka*, translated their texts for the Russian avant-garde journal *Transponans*.
4. Nekrasius Jonas from Lietuvos, TSR organized two mail art exhibitions, The Windmill, October 28, 1989–February 28, 1990, and The Bridges held in Pakruojis, Lithuania from May to October 1990. In November 1990, Jonas, in collaboration with Italian Bruno Chiarlone, was organizing a third mail art exhibition with a theme of "Lithuanian Independence."
5. I read in Sverdlovsk's newspaper about a mail art project there entitled *My God*. Serge Segay and I had planned a mail art show for Leningrad (St. Petersburg), but the KGB took our initiative into their own hands and we refused to pursue the idea any further.

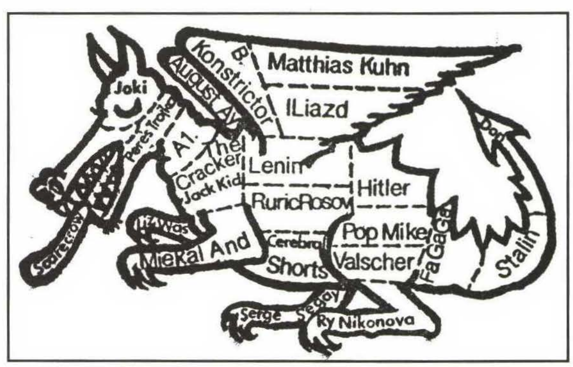
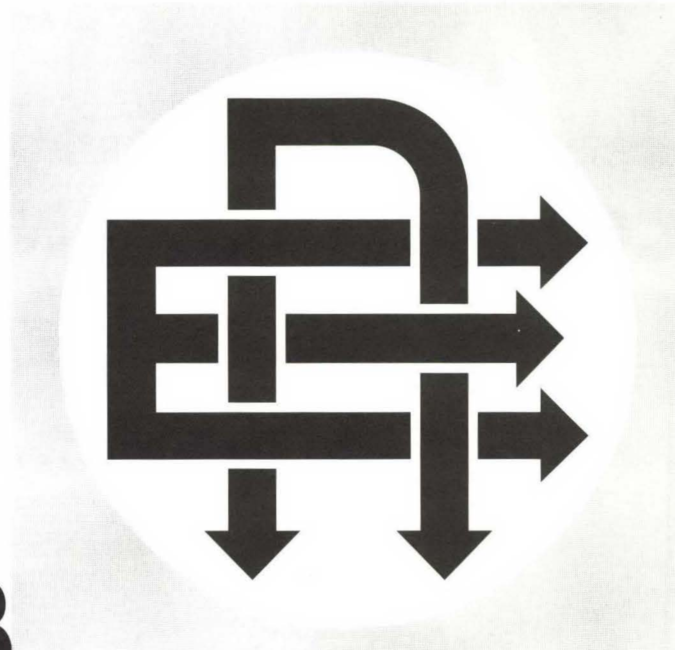


Figure 64. David Jarvis, Serge Segay and Rea Nikonova. *Soviet Mail Art Dragon*, 1989. Rubber Stamp.

New Directions
In places where public plastic express
is reduced from assemblyLine
obedience repetition fashion is demanded,
what is responsible choice? Interaction
demands abandon daring do it?
It's in the air again to speakAct out again on
maintenance meaning sex love food shelter
clothing fame death abuse voices justice isms
in the air again to invent new ways to speakAct.

Coco Gordon



PART 3 NEW DIRECTIONS

What is new in networking is often an antithesis to what is fashionable in the art market. Indeed, some of the activity which permeates the ethereal networking realms is anarchist, subversive, and utopian, forged from the twentieth-century traditions of Dada, Lettrism, Cobra, Fluxus, Situationism, and arte povera. This section presents essays that investigate the future of mail art networking in the 1990s. Networking project proposals by H.R. Fricker, Stewart Home and Crackerjack Kid demonstrate global efforts to congress, art strike, and telenetlink.

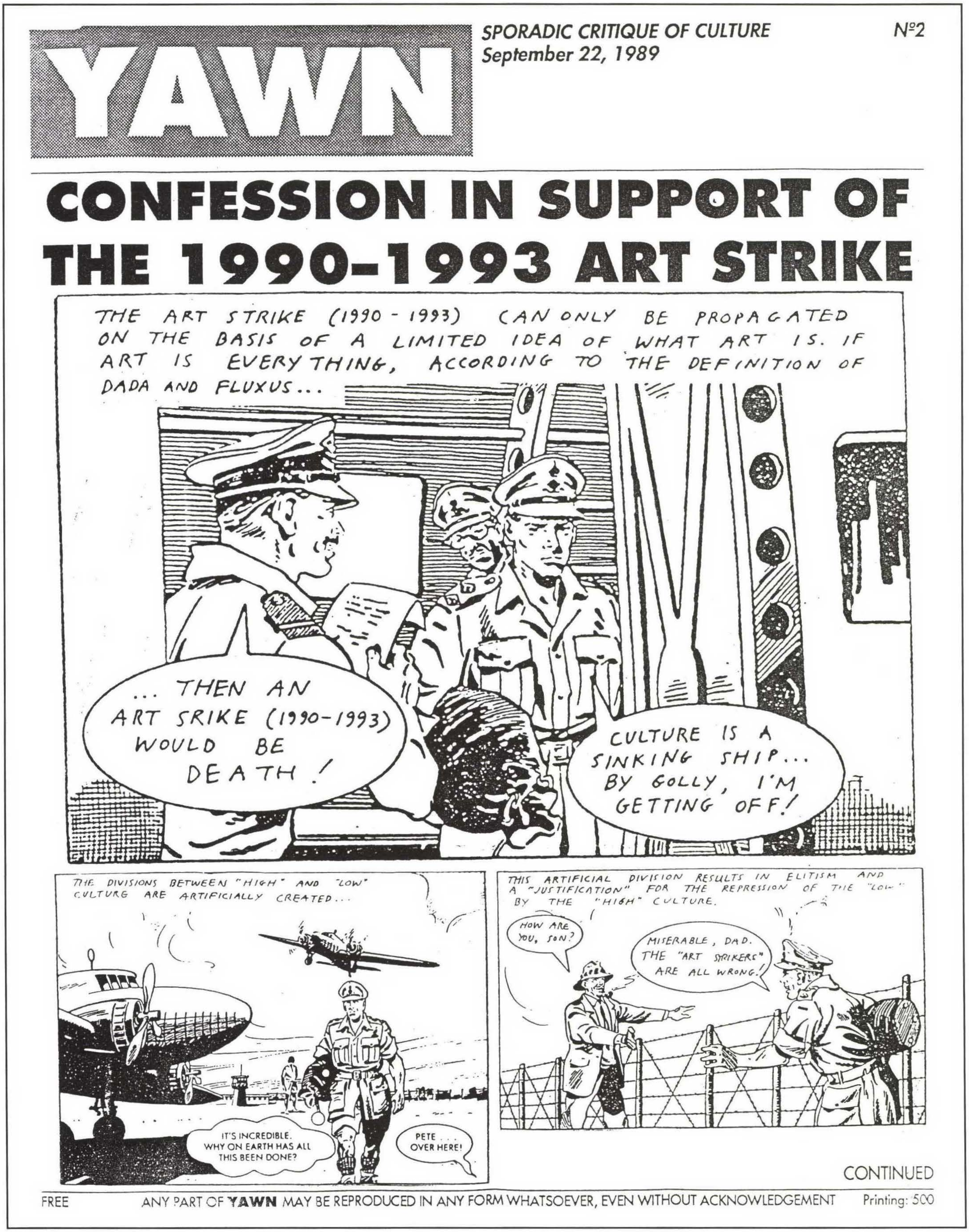


Figure 65. Lloyd Dunn, *YAWN: Sporadic Critique of Culture*, U.S.A., 1989. Zine.

CHAPTER 14
NEW DIRECTIONS: INTO THE NINETIES

John Held

Freedom Opens: Walls crumble

Late in 1989, I received a letter from a Norwegian rock music critic who had just visited a mutual friend in Romania. He wrote to tell me that my Romanian correspondent had not heard from me in some time and wondered if it was because of censorship from the Romanian government or because I had no time to write him.

After telling me of restrictive conditions in Romania he went on to explain, "You can understand how much it means for A.Z. and other mail art people in Romania to have some contacts outside. But the secret police confiscate everything they don't understand, even if it is not political; if they're not sure, they stop it. A.Z. is worried that you may have not received his letters for some such reason and begs you to know that he always replies to your letters to him if you would continue to write to him even if it may seem that he has not replied."[1]

I must admit that at times when I write platitudes about mail art fostering "international artist cooperation" and establishing a new "global vocabulary" I sometimes have my doubts. The flicker of light is so small that you never know if the sparks can be seen. And then a letter like this arrives and confirmation exists that yes, one person can make a difference.

Soon after the letter arrived, the walls tumbled down throughout Eastern Europe. It meant not only greater political and social freedom, but also the opening of artistic freedom for numerous artists who labored under government repression for so long. It can be said that mail art played an integral part in keeping their lines of communication open throughout difficult times.

In a letter dated 12 December 1989, Hungarian mail artist György Galántai wrote about the catalog he enclosed:

> I am glad to be able to send you—after six years—this *Commonpress (#51) Hungary* issue. This catalogue was finished in January 1984, but due to political circumstances (the exhibition was banned) I was under police control. All my collaborators were frightened and only some copies could be printed with Xerox technique. Finally, we are in a more liberal Hungarian Republic and I can publicly show the once banned material and publish the *Commonpress #51* catalogue in the quality I always wanted.[2]

Even the (former) Soviet Union had been exposed to the ever widening ripples of the mail art network. An issue of the then-Soviet art journal *Iskusstvo* carried an article on mail art written by Serge Segay with the title, "Where the Secret is Hidden." So, in the beginning of the 1990s we are finding ourselves in a world in which the free flow of information will become requisite for a continuing harmonious global situation.

Open Networking: Sacred Run

One direct consequence of the new openness in Hungary is the *Sacred Run—Europe 1990* project (Chapter 19) which took Japanese mail artists Shozo Shimamoto, Ryosuke Cohen and Mayumi Handa through East Germany, Poland, Finland, Norway and the Soviet Union (Leningrad, Tartu, Riga, Kiev and Moscow). According to Shozo Shimamoto, "*The Run for Land and Life* was a call to people worldwide to move away from the path of destruction towards the path of a healthier and more peaceful life initiated by Native American and Japanese Peace

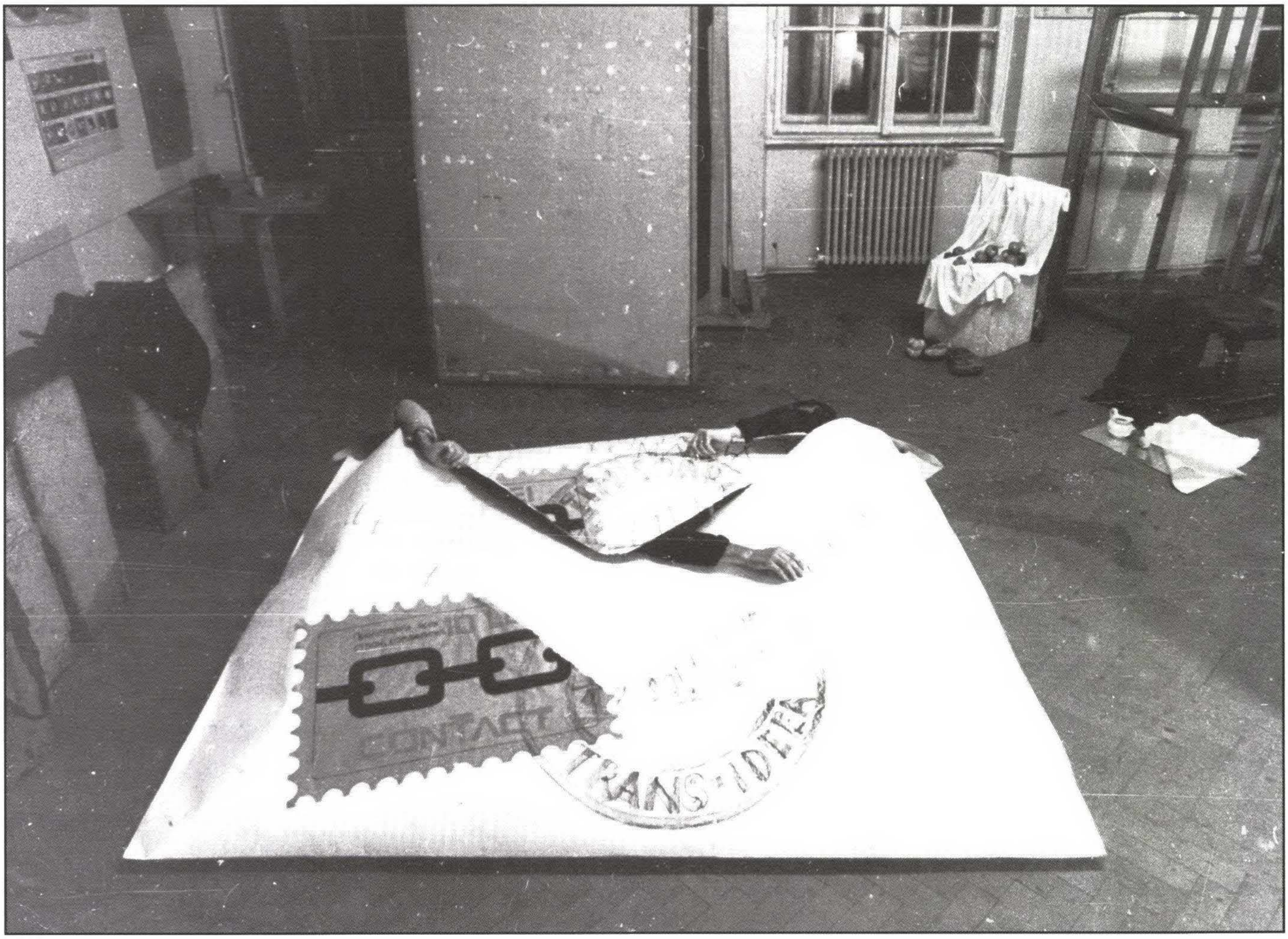


Figure 66. Constantin Flondor, Iosif Kiraly, and Doru Tulcan, *Mail Art Performance*, Romania, 1982. Performance Art. In a letter to the editor dated January 5, 1993, Kiraly wrote: "In the 80's Mail Art was for me and for many artists from communist countries the only possibility to have a contact outside of our borders. Even in this way, I had a lot of problems with censorship and with Romanian secret services because of my correspondence. Even the message of the performance from 1982 (above) was that you can travel out of the country only by post—if you are lucky."

Movements." Providing support services for the Native American Indian runners, the three Japanese mail artists posted art and information on their car from mail artists worldwide. In preparation for the *Sacred Run* (August 6–October 13, 1990), the mail art community offered not only their art, but sleeping facilities to members of the caravan. The Japanese mail artists were joined on the tour by European mail artists and mail art friends abroad like Gerard Barbot who traveled from Brooklyn, New York especially for *Sacred Run*. The success of this project will undoubtedly stimulate other global collaborations by mail artists throughout the 1990s. Mail art can often serve as a springboard. Postal relationships result in personal contacts and are used for opening cultural and social purposes.

Mail art is constantly evolving, but it is an evolution that occurs away from the mainstream art establishment. In the 1990s, mail art doors may remain open, but mail art still remains a "hidden secret." Even though there are repeated calls for more socially committed art in the art press, mail art is left out in its discussion. One reason for the oversight

is that the mail art genre demands involvement; to know mail art is to do mail art.

Thinking Openly: Art Strike 1990–1993

There are creative ideas that sweep through the mail art network with great spontaneity and energy, but sometimes a concept, like Art Strike: 1990–1993, can be problematical and confrontational. Art Strike, followed to the letter, would make the Nineties a very fallow time for an explosive medium, but not all networkers will be full-time adherents to the concept because of its class war rhetoric. Art Strike is more a starting point than an ending.

Art Strike serves a purpose in the current situation of mail art. It is a cleansing agent that is intended to get artists thinking openly about why they make art, and who they serve by doing so. After talking to Stewart Home, who originated the concept, it appears that the concept is both intrinsically connected to the English class system and linked to the understanding of the extreme right and left politics that function in England. For these reasons, mail artists outside of England may find Art Strike's concepts and arguments difficult to grasp.

If the political impact of Art Strike is somewhat tempered by an unfamiliarity with British class structure and politics, it is easier to relate to the aesthetic concerns of the Art Strike Action Committees. Writing in *Smile Magazine,* Home discusses mail art, the commodification of art, and the differences between art and creativity:

> The term Mail Art is, however, a misnomer. The written, drawn, painted and printed words, images and objects are exchanged in kind, they are not mediated by the more advanced monetary exchanges of the capitalist epoch. The vast majority of pieces exchanged have no monetary value and so cannot be considered art, a sub-division of reification that is characterized by a high monetary exchange value as well as an ideological content. Some pieces of 'postal art' might be commodified at a later date and traded for money, but this is a potential unlikely to be realized in the forseeable future, and until it occurs, the artifacts concerned cannot strictly be considered art.[3]

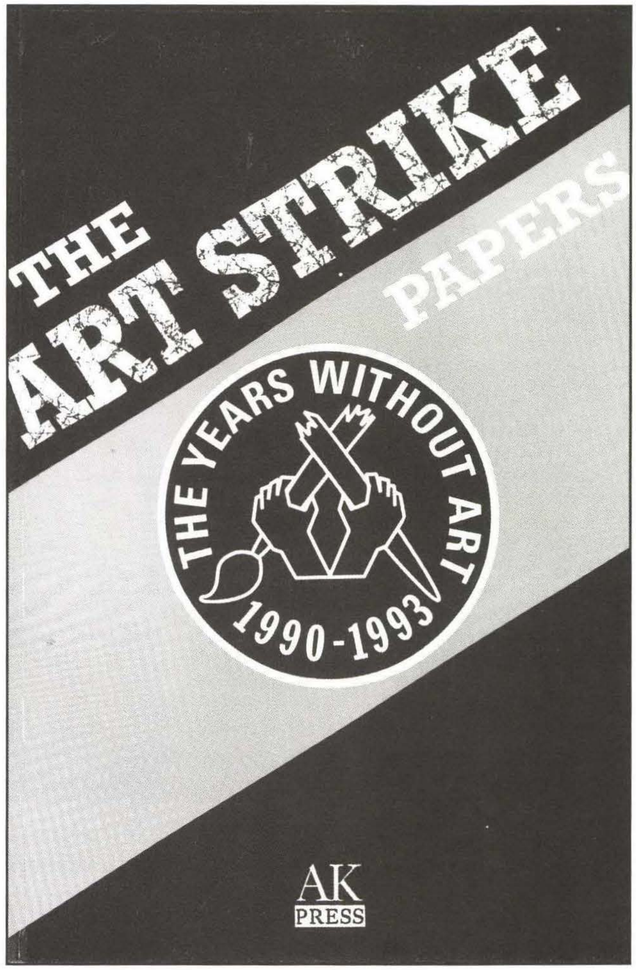


Figure 67. Stewart Home, *The Art Strike Papers*, England, 1991. Book. *The Art Strike Papers* is a substantial collection of material produced in response to the Art Strike 1990–1993. It is made up entirely of pieces which have appeared since the publication of *The Art Strike Handbook* in April 1989.

After a somewhat hesitant and confused initial reaction, mail artists embraced the Art Strike concept in their characteristically irreverent, socially engaging and creative manner. Michael Leigh of London, England, created a rubber stamp proclaiming the Pretentious Drivel Strike, while American mail artist Mark Corotto, a.k.a. FaGaGaGa, mass produced stickers asking, "Are You An



Figure 68. Shaun Caton and John Held, *Art Strike Mantra*, 1989. Performance Art. John Held appears in a "network wetsuit" with Shaun Caton on Held's right side. Held is chanting Crackerjack Kid's *Art Strike Mantra* October 29, 1989 at Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park, London, England.

Art Strike Scab?" In a collaborative audio mail art project, the Crackerjack Kid (U.S.) sent out an *Art Strike Mantra* cassette to be recorded and returned to him for completion. (Fig. 68) The mantra reads in part: "We want to show you a strategy for attaining art strike nirvana. We want to show you how you can fight art as status, art as commodity, art as hierarchy. Our strategy will help you lose your egotism, self importance, self indulgence, self esteem."[4] Andrej Tisma, a long-time mail art participant from Yugoslavia, wrote:

> Now that I have learned the reasons for the international Art Strike 1990–1993 I declare that I will support it, but in Yugoslavia, the country where I am living and making art, an Art Strike would have no sense because:
> 1. There is no art market here.
> 2. Prices of artworks are so low that you don't sell at all. You make art for pleasure, philosophical and creative reasons.
> 3. We have only a few art critics and curators, and they have no power or influence upon artists.
> 4. You don't have to pay the galleries for having your own exhibition, but galleries pay you for that. Shows are not commercial at all, as alternative artists can exhibit in official gallery spaces.
> 5. The serious culture hardly exists here. It is repressed by the primitive peasant culture, so our aim is to develop and support culture here.
>
> So, I am suggesting to all art strikers to come and settle in Yugoslavia during the period 1990–1993 and continue in making art and exhibitions.[5]

While he ceased to publish *Photostatic Magazine* during Art Strike, Lloyd Dunn began distributing *Yawn: Sporadic Critique of Culture* (Fig. 65). Dunn wrote, "The Art Strike offers the most aggressive and consistent critique available of the status quo of production and consumption and its power structure."[6] And something called *Forced Art Participation (FAP) 1990–2001* has surfaced in *Yawn* in an attempt to "integrate the mental set 'art' into the daily routine of all individuals."[7]

My way of dealing with Art Strike, 1990–1993 has been to examine the reasons for my own cultural participation. To see if art is an egotistical projection of the self upon others, or whether after fifteen years of participation in the international mail art network I am able to avoid the term "art" altogether and, instead, forge some new hybrid of art and life. It is because of Art Strike that this intensive questioning has occurred.

Open Ethics?

Stewart Home has stated, "Some pieces of 'postal art' might be commodified at a later date and traded for money, but this is potentially unlikely to be realized in the foreseeable future."[8] This statement has already been challenged and is likely to become one of the main issues confronting mail art in the Nineties. In our discussion of mail art "Into the Nineties" we must consider if mail art will open in commercial galleries.

From December 7 to 30, 1989, the Davidson Gallery in Seattle, Washington, held an International Invitational Artistamp Exhibition, curated by James Warren Felter of Vancouver, Canada. Felter hosted the Artists' Stamps and Stamp Images exhibition in 1976 at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, Canada, and it was here that artist-created stamps were collected for public viewing. An excellent catalogue was produced for the show and became the first printed literature of the stamp-art genre. So when Felter issued a call to artists early in 1989 to submit editions of signed and numbered stamp sheets for exhibition and sale, he was given the respect he deserved as a pioneer of the medium. But his request raises several important questions for mail artists that will be more fully examined in the coming decade.

The questions raised concern the sale of mail-art-related objects and whether the *invitational* show and publication will make inroads into the traditionally open nature of the classic mail art exhibition ("no fees, all work shown, documentation to all participants"). Firsthand, I must say that I was one of the mail artists who accepted Felter's request to participate in the Davidson Gallery exhibition. This was due to his historical importance to the field and a belief that mail art, when properly curated, could enter the gallery system and compete, both visually and conceptually (but not necessarily financially), with any other art being produced today. In addition, even though artist postage stamps could be successfully marketed through a gallery structure, it doesn't mean they couldn't be given as a gift through normal mail art exchange. Each method of distribution could exist within its own proper framework.

In contrast, here is another situation. I received a call from a collector of "cinderellas." This is a branch of philately that deals with postage stamps, seals and labels having no official value for mailing purposes. Recently, *Lick 'Em, Stick 'Em: The Art of the Poster Stamp*, was published that dealt with one aspect of this particular field of stamp collecting.[9] The call I received was due to the collector/dealer's interest in the artist postage stamp from his exposure to the field through the Davidson Gallery exhibit. As a dealer, he wanted more information and sources about the field to promote the collecting of artist stamps to his customers. I suggested he contact mail artists active in the field and from their submissions put together a catalogue; this method would give him an overview of the field while involving him in the process of mail art. The mail artists, for their part, would appreciate the interest he showed, and a nicely produced catalogue could also contribute to the development of this still-evolving genre within mail art.

Instead, the dealer issued a letter to mail artists, which I received second-hand, asking "to let us know what you currently have available so we can discuss the details of

either purchasing your works or handling them on a consignment basis."[10] Furthermore, the dealer stated that, "I hope we can establish a relationship that is not only mutually beneficial, but beneficial to the advancement of Artists' Stamp collecting worldwide."[11] But this is never going to happen when one side of the "mutually beneficial" team doesn't care enough to find out what the field is really about. Any other form of involvement is bound to be superficial.

One dealer who is going about it with more sensitivity is Barbara Moore, proprietor of Bound and Unbound in New York City. Moore has been a champion of Fluxus and has written about the movement in such magazines as *Artforum*. Her curation of the exhibition, The Page as Alternate Space at Franklin Furnace was a penetrating look at artist designed publications. Recently, Moore curated an exhibition called, The Book is in the Mail, which featured such artists as Elenor Antin, George Brecht, Buster Cleveland, Pawel Petasz, Robert Filliou, Henry Flynt, Gilbert and George, Guerrilla Art Action Group, Ray Johnson, On Kawara, George Maciunas, Mieko Shiomi, Daniel Spoerri, Wolf Vostell and Robert Watts. In her introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Moore writes:

> This exhibition is not a survey of mail art. It's intentionally limited to ways in which artists have used the mails as a process for the production and dissemination of book-like or sequential works. It's about 'mailed' rather than 'mail' art, about communication, subverting established procedures, and the increasing internationalization of the avant-garde which, before the fax machine, employed the post office as the most efficient means of eradicating geographical and institutional boundaries.[12]

People are still cautious about the institutionalization of mail art, but mail art is sure to attract it's share of attention in the present decade in the context of the Fine Arts. Results will be both good and bad. It's always instructive and fascinating to see how a previously subversive and ignored activity, such as Fluxus and the Situationist International, are institutionalized by the art establishment; in the coming decade this could begin to happen to mail art.

The other question raised by the Davidson Gallery exhibit of artist postage stamps is whether the invitational approach to mail art is at odds with its democratic nature. The open structure of the medium has caused mail art to grow to the proportions it has, and everyone who wanted to has been able to participate. There are few roadblocks to newcomers. Most projects and publications follow the same guidelines as exhibitions: an open call goes out for submissions and all who answer are included. From time to time, an organizer decrying the uneven quality of contributions will attempt to limit their project to invited artists only, but the invitational approach diminishes the spirit of accepted openness in mail art.

Computers and Fax: Opening Geopolitical Boundaries

Let us return to Barbara Moore's statement about the fax machine being "the most efficient means of eradicating geographical and institutional boundaries."[13] Is fax a complement to mail art, or a threat, and does its increased speed expand the effectiveness of the technology over the postal systems' slower arrival time? We will probably begin to sense the answer to these questions in the Nineties.

In the 18 January 1990 issue of *Artweek* there appeared a review of the exhibit Information curated by Robert Nickas, which contained some seventy pieces faxed to Terrain Gallery in San Francisco by such mainstream artists as Peter Halley, Nancy Spero, Vito Acconci and Hans Haacke. Just like mail art shows, entries were push-pinned to the wall. The author of the review, Anthony Aziz, writes:

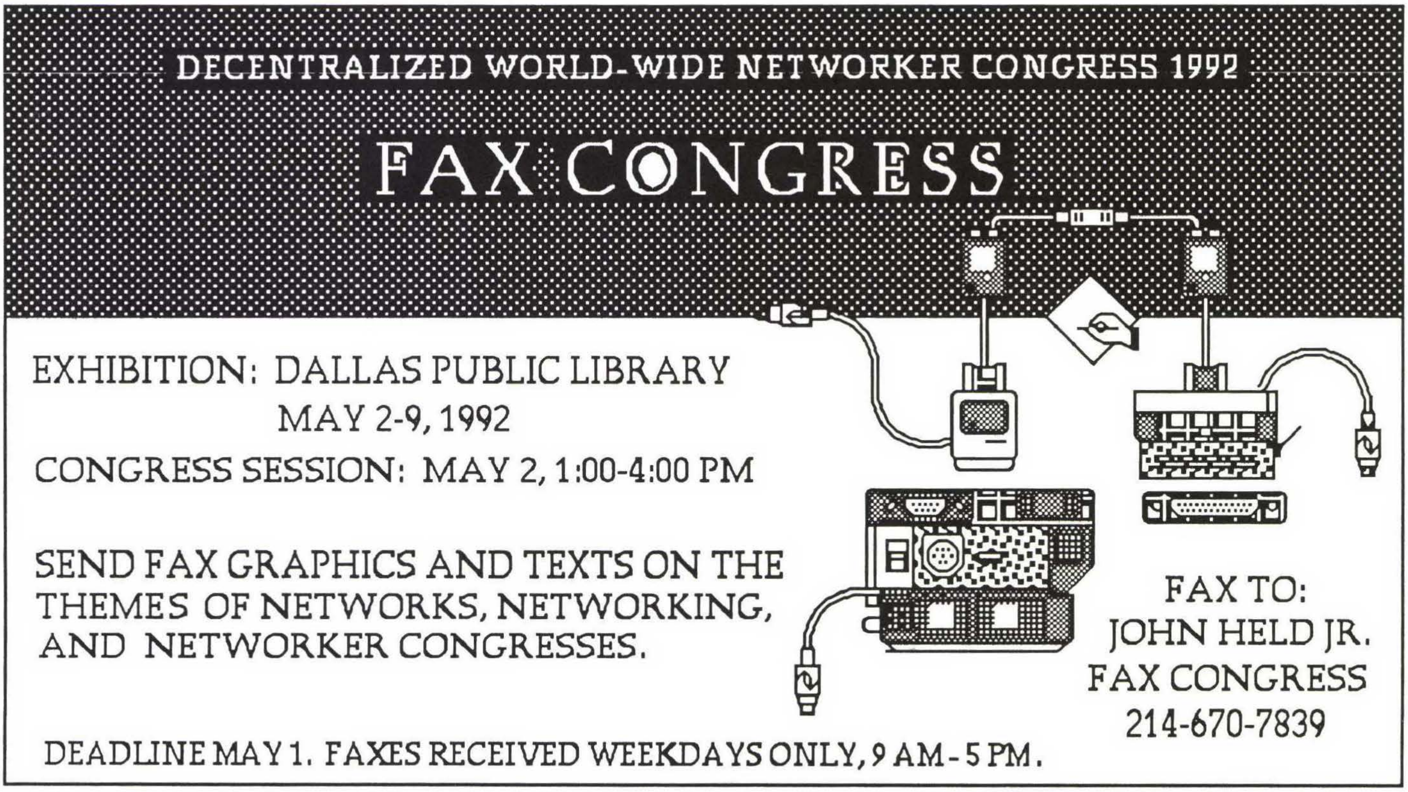


Figure 69. John Held, Fax Congress, U.S.A., 1992. Held's congress drew approximately thirty responses by mail artists faxing from five countries. During the May 2, 1992 opening at Dallas Public Library, panel discussions featured Austin, Texas mail artist Daniel Plunkett, who presented a talk on the zine and cassette culture. Russell Butler of Gurdon, Arkansas talked about his boxcar graffiti art. Ex Posto Facto from Garland, Texas presented the possibilities of electronic mail, and keynote speaker Ivan Stang (a.k.a. Church of the Subgenius) discussed mail art and alternative networks.

> If the fax is essentially the visual manifestation of a telephone call, its single most important advantage for art is its ability to provide a new vehicle for distributing information. A medium artists can exploit like other fringe non-gallery media—mail art, video, cable TV, street art, performance." The review also refers to a Summer 1989 exhibit at Capp Street Project in San Francisco with artists from Border Arts Workshop, who installed an "international fax network." This (fax) component of the exhibit was intended to bridge communities across both geographical and economic borders, making advanced communication technology available to those who might not otherwise have access to it.[14]

There is obviously a place for fax in the mail art network—at the very least, as a way to meet last minute show deadlines; at the very best, to utilize a medium that has a faster pace than the postal system. Mail art will use fax technology, as it does any communication technology.

It seems as if there are several directions mail artists are taking new communications technology. Computer works are being sent through the postal system, networks are being established by modems, information is being stored for fast retrieval and updating, and discs are being created as actual art objects. Increasingly, computers have been a topic of discussion (Chapter 17). Guy Bleus, Belgium (Chapter 11); Charles Francois, Belgium (Chapter 16); and Ruud Janssen, the Netherlands, have written about the impact of computers upon the mail art network. Pawel Petasz, a pioneering mail artist from Poland, has held a computer mail art show entitled, Square 88. Fred Truck from Des Moines has compiled a computerized listing of conceptual performance events which has attracted a lot of mail art participation. A yearly *Report of the*

Performance Bank is published in connection with the project (Appendix 4, p. 266 for Fred Truck's archive).

Guy Bleus, who is one of the key theoreticians in the network, has just joined the computer age. An earlier project of his, listing all the *Commonpress* editions, is an exemplary mail art documentation project. Bleus writes that, "The transformation of 'mailed-art' into 'electronic' mail-art (or 'computer' mail art, or 'P.C.' mail-art, or 'modem' mail-art, or 'on-line' mail art, etc.) will provisionally not menace, but extend the existing postal mail-art network with recent technological facilities."[15]

Others are working computers as electronic paint brushes and as artworks in and of themselves. Eric Finlay, living in London, England, is in his 70s and has put aside his considerable talents as a painter to work extensively with the Amiga computer. Rod Summers, well known in the network for his audio work in connection with the VEC Archives (Appendix 4, p. 269 for VEC Archives), creates "environments" on the computer that can be manipulated by the user. Later, they are sent out as artistic software to other artists.

Conclusion

The Nineties unfold as a time of new possibilities and ideas, of continuing debate concerning issues vital to the network (Chapter 29, "Debate and Dialogue"), and of increasing experimentation with emerging communication technologies. The Eighties were a time of self-reflection in mail art: Crane and Stofflet's *Correspondence Art* was published and provided an extensive overview of the medium.[16] The Decentralized Worldwide Mail Art Congresses were held in the mid-Eighties and the Franklin Furnace controversy continued the schism between mail art and mainstream art. This self-reflection will continue as long as the medium is unexamined by the art establishment.

The mail art network is fortunate in being composed of a dedicated group of participants who expand and open the network. In the 18 January 1990 *Artweek* article that dealt with a fax exhibition, Robert Nickas stated, "These artists, along with others in the show, belong to, and emerge from, a non-object, idea-based idiom that peaked in the late 1960s and early 1970s."[17] This seems to be the prevalent view of mainstream critics, that mail art's time has come and gone, that Ray Johnson was interesting but those that came after him were doomed to repeat the past. This just isn't true to those who have followed the evolution of the network. In the Nineties, mail art will be a vital process of participation that serves as an umbrella for new talent in a variety of disciplines, be it graphics, audio, publishing, performance, conceptual, computer or literary arts. Mail art will expand in the Nineties because the world is becoming more open and artists are eager to communicate with one another. Networking artists continue to open the world around them and constantly interpret changing conditions.

* * * * * *

1. Letter from Arild Bergh to the author, postmarked from Orammen, Norway, November 20, 1989.
2. (Ed. note;) The *Commonpress* project was initiated by Pawel Petasz of Elblag, Poland, in 1977. Acting as coordinator, Petasz assigned issue numbers to various mail artists throughout the world. Over fifty issues were published by various editors on different themes of their own devising. In essence, *Commonpress* served as an ongoing networking performance project stressing international cooperation and an open-ended publishing endeavor.
3. Stewart Home, ed., *Smile*, London, England, 1986, Issue No. 9.
4. Crackerjack Kid, *Art Strike Mantra: An Audio Mail Art Project*, C-40 cassette recording, Hanover, New Hampshire: Crackerjack Productions, 1991.
5. Enclosure in a letter from Andrej Tisma to the author, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, January 26, 1990.
6. Lloyd Dunn, ed., *Yawn: A Sporadic Critique of Culture*, Oakdale, Iowa, November 3, 1989, Issue No. 5.
7. Lloyd Dunn, ed., *Yawn: A Sporadic Critique of Culture*, Oakdale, Iowa, October 21, 1989, Issue No. 4.
8. Home, *Smile*, Issue No. 9.

9. Thomas H. Steele, *Lick 'Em, Stick 'Em: The Art of the Poster Stamp*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1989.
10. Enclosure in a letter from Rudi Rubberoid to the author, Bellingham, Washington, February 1990.
11. Ibid.
12. Barbara Moore, Ed., *The Book is in the Mail*, New York: Bound and Unbound, February 1990, 1.
13. Ibid.
14. Robert Nickas, "FAX Art: 'Information Show'" at Terrain Gallery, *Artweek*, January 18, 1990, 9.
15. Enclosure entitled "An Introduction About Zero-One Mail Art" by Guy Bleus in a letter to the author from Guy Bleus, Wellen, Belgium, February 19, 1990.
16. (Ed. note:) *Correspondence Art* is an extensive sourcebook and history that emphasized mail art activities from 1960–1980; the edition numbering fewer than 3,000 copies is now out of print.
17. Robert Nickas, p. 9.

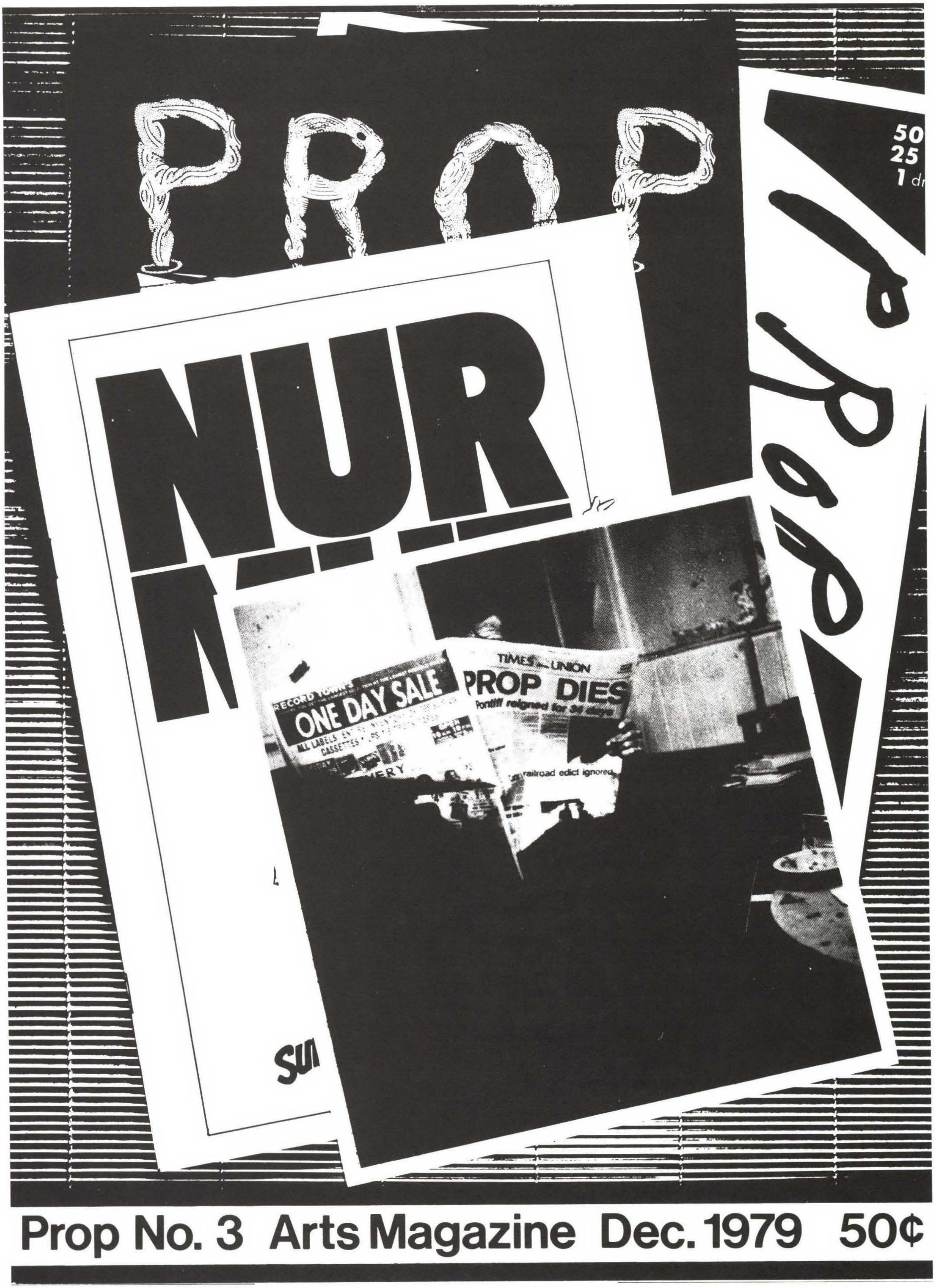


Figure 70. Joachim Frank, *Prop*, U.S.A., 1979. Zine.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 15
THE EXPANDING NETWORK: TOWARD THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

Joachim Frank

Networking in Science and Arts

My personal experiences with networking have been in the different realms of science and the arts. As a research scientist at the research laboratories of the New York State Department of Health, I work on three-dimensional visualization of structures at the molecular and cellular levels. As a writer, editor, and visual artist, I have contributed extensively to the artists' networking publications, *Prop* and *Artcomnet.* In these seemingly different science and arts activities I experienced, besides the focus on visual themes, the aspect of networking as a common denominator.[1] In science, it is commonplace to find an international group of investigators, representing a multitude of fields, collaborating on the same project. In the arts, where traditionally individual authorship is more highly valued than a share in collaborative work, the phenomena of mail art[2] and correspondence art have created a new, legitimate platform for participation, and thus have brought science and arts onto a more equal footing.

Most interesting in the context of our topic, networking in science is exemplified in the process by which a manuscript with collaborative authorship is drafted. This process constitutes the most intense period of the collaboration. In principle, an infinite number of drafts is necessary for convergence of a consensus because each time a draft is changed by one participant the next one in the circle is confronted with a new context. This is similar to the process of tuning a piano, which has no exact solution, because the tuning of each string affects the tension of the strings already tuned, and consequently brings them out of tune again. In practice, the circle is broken by an exercise in restraint and by the abandonment of overly pedantic standards.

Before the onset of electronic mailing via computer networks, a manuscript used to physically travel over large distances, accumulating layers of comments and insertions. When on a sabbatical in England in 1987, I benefited for the first time from the computer network that links many academic institutions, and I was able to receive, edit, and send manuscripts across the world and receive a reply to my comments, all in the space of a single day! This experience had a profound effect not only on the efficiency of scientific collaborations, but also on the way I perceived myself in realtion to the globe around me. This was, perhaps, similar to the experience of astronauts who for the first time see the planet Earth as a detached ball in the sky, and who have spoken about their sense of awe, despite the fact that they knew all along that this was going to be what Earth would look like. I believe that this perception of sitting in a "live node" that is connected to many points across the globe — and the feeling of simultaneity that comes with it—will have a profound effect on the artists and the art once they share the same ready access to the electronic network as is now available for scientific research.

This brings me to my experiences from 1978 to 1986 as an editor of *Prop.*[3] (Fig. 70) During that time my correspondence with the contributors was limited by the speed and success of physical transport of mail through the postal system. *Prop* was founded in Albany, New York by a group of artists known as Workspace[4] and became a new



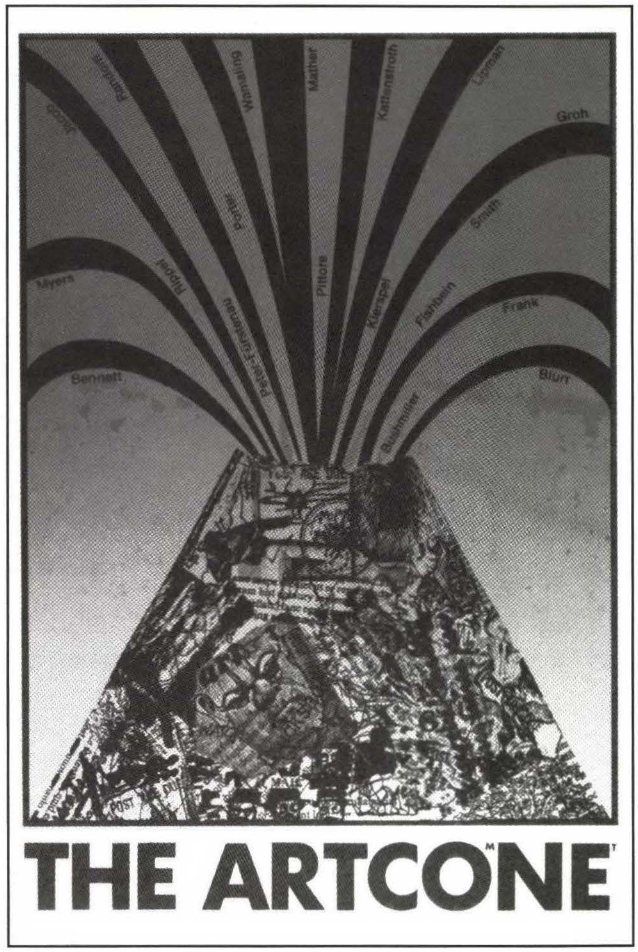


Figure 71 (Left) and Figure 72 (Right). Joachim Frank, *ARTCOMNET*, U.S.A., 1984. Postcards.

focus point for the group after a two-year uninterrupted series of performances. This origin of the magazine explains the immediate emphasis on projects that invited reader participation (e.g., the Void Show[5]) *Prop* was first edited on a rotating basis by two or three members of the group; in later issues I assumed a primary role by default. *Prop* first acted primarily as a documentation of collaborative visions and brainstorms of the group; later, when the magazine became widely circulated, it enjoyed some popularity among experimental authors and mail artists. At this stage, the volume of the correspondence with authors and readers became enormous—an indication that *Prop*, as similar magazines, was meeting a new need: artists needing an exchange of visions in a free form not supported by academic or descriptive journals. Not surprisingly, the days of the magazine were numbered when Workspace dissolved. *Prop* became the self-reflection of the single, remaining editor; a node without a network.

Another experience with networking comes from my participation in ARTCOMNET (ART COMmunication NETwork), a group activity centered around a Xeroxed newsletter organized by Larry Smith[6] in 1982. For five years and 25 issues, Smith adhered to the principle of reproducing everything that was sent in by group participants: notes, announcements, letters, poems, visuals, etc.[7] We could have called him accumulator

rather than editor, had it not been for a process of "editorial networking," that is, addition of comments that tie all pieces together in some way. I think that this seemingly impossible mediation of the ARTCOMNET newsletter was both skillful and successful, and served as an unpretentious forum for ideas, monologues, and chats about the struggles of artists in search of their art.

The existence of ARTCOMNET helped establish distinct relationships among some of the participating artists, who started correspondences and interactions outside the framework of the newsletter. However, ARTCOMNET had no identity or direction as a group in terms of artistic or aesthetic concepts. In Smith's words, "I decided to try to set up a situation in which unacquainted artists could communicate back and forth, allowing their thoughts to be shared openly and unrestricted by formality."[8]

What I found particularly interesting were the attempts to create a mythology by means of works that have the group itself as a theme: the *Yearbook*, from which Smith was quoted before, was an attempt at self-reflection and self-representation of a group that had no common goal other than interaction and exchange of creative ideas. Ironic references to a purported unity and great influence are also found in postcards created by various group members. These postcards feature themes that allude to power and fame: a volcano (Figures 71 and 72), MTV, and Halley Comet.

Brain Storm and Lone Ranger

It is intriguing to see how today's world-wide electronic network is in some sense an embodiment of Robert Filliou's 1965 visionary phrase "eternal network" at a time when computers were, in fact, still huge, solitary, disconnected boxes. Later, the terms "ethereal open network" and "neonic network" emerged in the correspondences between Chuck Welch, Vittore Baroni and Volker Hamann in their 1986–87 international networking project, *Netzine*.[9] In part, these three mail artists were emphasizing the ethereal, delicate qualities the communication network was bestowed with, qualities not always of material, objective reality. Interestingly, there exists a fortuitous reference to "ethereal network" in the word, "ethernet," the name of a present hardware connection that is frequently used to link computers together.

So far, scientists have been the main beneficiaries of the new age of instant worldwide communication; however, even though sponsorship of the arts and humanities is minuscule compared with that of science, it is not futuristic to think of a time when artists will gain wide access to electronic networks. To imagine what kind of impact this new means of communication might have on the arts, we should consider both of its components, the "medium" (form) and the "message" (content). Electronic networks are an example of a communication means where these aspects are clearly differentiable, the main message of Marshall McLuhan's treatise notwithstanding.[10]

The *message* aspect lies in the fact that existing ideas can now travel much faster than before. The artists' ability to interact thousands of times faster will accelerate the development and spread of artistic ideas, just as the onset of jet travel has accelerated the proliferation of new forms of the flu. In the same vein, we could think of the future when visual information might be transported with the same accuracy and speed, so that contents of messages may also be entirely non-verbal.

An interesting perspective arises when we consider the *medium* aspect and see the electronic network as an actual new field of artistic expression. The electronic network — when used as an immaterial extension of mail art — may permit the unfolding of artistic ideas into a new, global

performance space: figuratively speaking, onto the plaza of the global village. Here is the site for the ecumenical art activism that Chuck Welch envisions in the Introduction to this anthology. By engaging thousands of minds in the pursuit of a concept, the artist would be able to initiate or orchestrate a communication-happening on a global scale. Net-works might be the appropriate name, analogous to the tangible earth-works of the Sixties and Seventies.[11] It is difficult to speculate what particular forms these happenings may take, except for two models that come to mind: the "Brainstorm" and the "Lone Ranger." In the *Brainstorm* model, an idea, tossed out into the network, is being quickly illuminated from all possible directions. Such an event is self-documenting because all mail activity created in response to the original idea (along with all of its follow-ups) winds up in everybody's computer.

The *Lone Ranger* model of the communication-happening would take advantage of the lack of authentication of electronic mail, which enables an artist to take on any desired identity: he is able to masquerade as a scientist, bureaucrat, politician, or plumber, and conduct conversations, issue requests or unruly ideas. In the process of this interaction, amazing insights are obtained, and thousands of minds are stimulated.

Conclusion

Whenever new territory was explored in the past, it also became a playground for human imagination, and thus, by implication, a space into which art could unfold. The electronic network constitutes a new space, but this space is unique in that it is spanned by nodes and connections, and that it facilitates instant global interaction. The concept of the global village arrived quite naturally: a village is the place where people are in shouting distance of one another, where people speak the same language, where gossip thrives, where people are held together by common fate. The networks have arrived just in time, it seems, to make the changes in global thinking manifest in the arts. If everything goes right, electronic net-works may become the plaza on which the street-theatre of the global village will take place.

* * * * * *

1. For more views on the subject read Joachim Frank's "Networks and Networking," *The Works*, September, 1989, III: 8, 13, 19.
2. Some ideas about mail art are found in Joachim Frank, "On Mail Art and Mail Artists," *Umbrella*, March 1984, VII: 2, 45.
3. The subject and author index to all 13 issues of the magazine is found in *Prop 13* (1986). Copies of the magazine can be located at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY and at the Centre de Pompidou, Paris, France.
4. Workspace, an Albany, New York based group of performance artists, musicians, and painters, founded in 1976 to seek a non-commercial basis of art expression.
5. Void Show, solicited in *Prop #1*, exhibit 1980 by Workspace Loft, Inc., Albany, New York. Listed in "Selected List of Mail Art Exhibitions" in Michael Crane and Mary Stofflet, eds., *Correspondence Art*, Contemporary Arts Press, San Francisco: 1984.
6. Larry D. Smith, visual artist living in East Freedom, Pennsylvania. Major projects: *The ShNn Report*, a magazine co-edited with Larry Rippel; *Manifesto sHnnalchemy*, 1981; *Artcomnet Newsletter*, 1981–1987.
7. Larry D. Smith, "Once Upon a Time...", in Klaus Peter-Furstenau, ed., *The Real McCoy, A Yearbook of Artcomnet*, Frankfurt, 1986, 6–8.
8. Larry D. Smith, Ibid.
9. Vittore Baroni, Crackerjack Kid, and Volker Hamann, *The Making of Netzine: A Collaborative Net-Working Tool for Discovering Ethereal Open Networks*, Forte Dei Marmi: Near the Edge Editions, 1989.
10. Marshal McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.
11. Susan Sontag notes, "What is primary in a Happening is materials — and their modulations as hard and soft, dirty and clean" ("Happenings: an art of radical juxtaposition" in *Against Interpretation*, New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964). With matter as the main ingredient removed, the Communication Happening would only share the attributes of unpredictibility and unruliness with its predecessor.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 16

NETWORKING, TECHNOLOGY, IDENTITY

Charles Francois

It is always surprising to discover that many people seem unable to realize the important link between art and technology. Mail art is both an artifact and process that involves some form of modern technology. The process or delivery of mail-art messages includes many varieties of technological media that always exceed the simple decoration of an envelope or letter.[1]

Let's investigate the correlation between art and technology by imagining two young people living in the countryside of France at the beginning of this century. Each week they decide to make "mail art" by exchanging letters, texts, and drawings made with pens or rubber stamps. Our two friends live in close proximity to each other, and their mail is easily delivered by postmen who ride bicycles.

Now, our two friends may choose to exchange mail in a simple, predictable fashion for a long time, say, fifty years. And throughout this half-century both our friends and their mailman will have ventured towards using some new form of technology: typewriters replacing pens and vans instead of bikes. Throughout this long period of exchange by mail it is unlikely that many other friends from any great distances will have joined our two correspondence artists. Even though the telephone might exist, neither artist has any idea how mail art could be made with it.

The growth of communication from the turn of the century until the 1950s finds our two friends still exchanging an intimate, personalized form of art; but the technological world, meanwhile, is bringing major changes to their mailboxes. Postal airline networks have been growing and linking communication points around the globe. Our mail-art friends are unknown to other artists until they discover an entire generation of mail art personalities using copymachines as their preferred medium for disseminating information. The enormous distributive power of these machines helps generate what becomes known as The Network.

Upon finding the network community of mail artists, our two friends quickly discover how copymachines make their communication exchanges more efficient, economical and expedient. This simple little anecdote traces the growth of communications, technology and a global network community of artists.

Documentation of network activity can be found in major research projects such as John Held's *International Artist Cooperation: Mail Art Shows, 1970–85*, and *A World Bibliography of Mail Art*. In both of these resource books it is easy to trace how fast-copy technology and the growth of a mail art community have revolved around an ever-growing number of collaborative projects and mail art shows.

While the official beginning of mail art is generally presented as coming from New York in the Sixties, *networking* is a term that is often used to personify the technological and social transformation of mail art. The use of *networking* became prevalent in the early 1980s, and from 1985–1986 the term was used frequently in *Networking Currents* and in global projects such as Hans-Ruedi Fricker and Gunther Ruch's International Mail Art Congress. The success of Fricker and Ruch's networking project confirms that from 1970 to 1985 a new step had been made.[2] In the meantime, the art establishment had completely forgotten about mail art and knew nothing of networking.



Figure 73. Charles Francois, *Netshaker Harmonic Divergence Performance at Nord 251 Space* Belgium, 1992. Performance Event. Charles Francois in Liege, Belgium drinking a bottle of beer at Nord 251 Space while telecomputing with Crackerjack Kid (Hanover, NH U.S.A.), March 21, 1992.

For a time in the early 1970s, mail art received nominal recognition from the art establishment. But this early interest has fallen short partly because mail art is a process art, and its products are not always attractive by established standards. In a larger sense, perhaps it is better that mail art goes its own way. A new sensibility of creative communication was born in mail art and is growing as new tools of technology such as copy machines create massive, global exchange networks in the US, Western Europe and Japan.

While copy machines and mail art shows were instrumental in encouraging network growth between 1970 and 1985, a powerful network of telecom satellites were linking phone networks around the world. Since the mid 1980s, a powerful, personal tool has become available to mail art networkers through the fantastic advancement of micro-computer technology. Let's briefly trace how this revolutionary high-tech evolved.

In the late 1970s, companies such as Apple began developing micro-computers, and in the Eighties, IBM and others began producing their own product versions. Knowledge in programming languages was needed to operate those micro-computers, and this is why Apple introduced the graphic interface in 1984 with the new Macintosh computer. Since 1984, other machines were built on the same principle as the Macintosh, but by such companies as Amiga and Atari, who offered their technology at lower prices. The result was an affordable technological revolution much like Bell's telephone invention; computers were now common in both the workplace and home environment.[3]

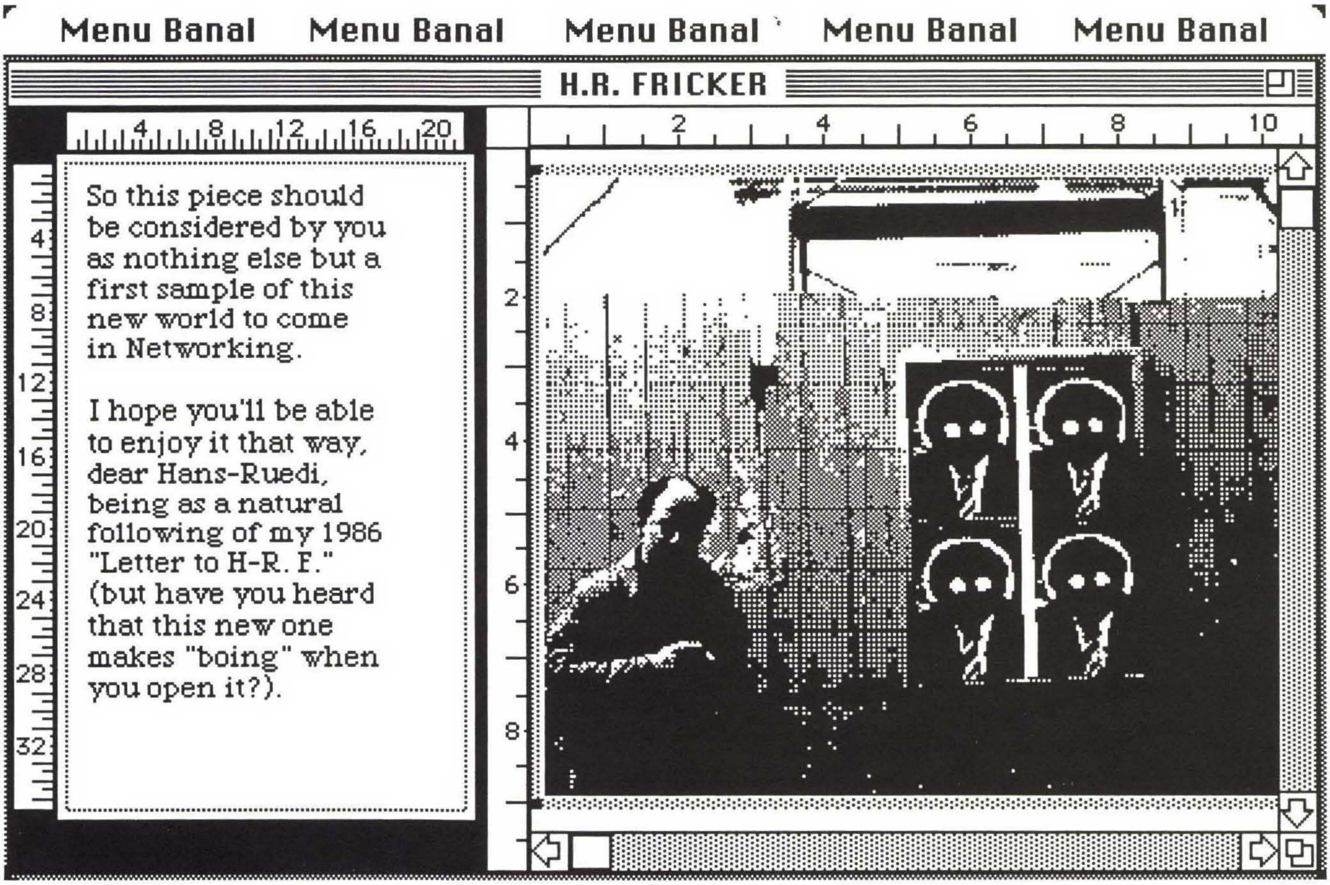


Figure 74. Charles Francois, *New Letter to H.R. Fricker*, Belgium, 1989. Hypercard Stackware program on disc.

In the last half of the 1980s, the graphic possibilities of micro-computer technology was continuously increasing, while a second-hand market arose and provided old machines at ever-lower prices. In less time than it took copy machines to revolutionize communications, micro-technology has become an enormous global tool for enhancing all forms of networking communication. While personal computers can be used to make graphic art, there is also the ability to globally transmit instant-communication art by phone from one computer to another. But this form of telecommunication technology is still in its infancy, and its adaptation to personal computers is gradually evolving. In late 1989, for example, only seven percent of all American Macintosh computers were connected to a modem.[4] Expectations for the Nineties are high because technology exists now to enable widespread change. Considering the rise in global postal rates and the decrease in phone rates, it is inevitable that public interest and awareness will grow.

How will the mail-art letter be changed with the advent of new telecommunication technology? A letter is a mix of creation and information, often resulting in texts or graphics. (Fig. 74) A floppy disc can be sent as a letter, but it can also add sound, animation and additional content to graphics and texts. Of course, sounds and movie pictures were already used in mail art through audio and video cassette exchanges. The difference, however, is how computer technology allows all content to be mixed into a single document of an interactive and tree-structured shape. This shape may emerge as content from mail artists, public sounds or image banks; images digitized by either sender or receiver. The receiver, for example, might choose to digitize images sent by mail artists who may or may not have a computer. It is essential to note here that the entire computer world can operate without paper. The paradox is that computers are accelerating the production

and consumption of paper products, as evidenced by the rapid rise of desktop publishing and optical character recognition.

But what of the mail artist who creates works on paper? How will they transmit these tangible products with computer technology? Today, it is possible for works on paper to be introduced in computers with scanners or other input devices. Conversely, artifacts produced by electronic mail artists can be printed by laserprinters or other output devices. Computers can serve as a playing field, where paper, audio and video products are mixed immediately to generate other products. This possibility of mixing can result in unique, interactive shapes and also in the composition of letters that have never existed before. All of this interactive, creative play can be put into one's pocket or sent in envelopes without rupturing the more traditional mail-art practice of letter-sending.

I have briefly mentioned that micro-computers make it possible to generate material that can be sent or received by phone without the interference of the postal system. Unlike ordinary mail, telecommunication transmissions are immediate regardless of the distance that must be reached. With the aid of satellites, a text from the US can be sent to Europe, then from Europe to Japan, and from Japan back to the US in less than one hour. At any point the content can be transformed or printed with dot matrix machines and laser printers. Currently, mail artists are able to integrate this new dimension of speed into their activity. This can be particularly useful to update checklists of projects and participants or to quickly create collective works such as newspapers or mail art books and zines.

The advantage of telecommunication post is in the instant feedback that results when both operators are physically present during an exchange. And yet, this aspect of requiring physical presence is often seen as a handicap, which doesn't exist with traditional post. But there are host system micro-computers that enable the management of communication without the presence of operators. Such systems do require a caller, but the recipient can be absent while the computer automatically reacts to any calls coming from other computers. What results in this technology is a mixture of phone and post, the electronic mailbox. Now, such a device not only receives messages or files from another computer, but it also automatically delivers public or private messages addressed to the caller.

With a little imagination, one could build electronic galleries based on this model. Rather than utilizing the telecommunication process as a way to update traditional presentations of paintings, it can be used to transform the artwork as you would like to have it. This is possible because in order to look at an artwork put on a host system, one must download the image so a tool can read it. While the art establishment wouldn't find much use for this kind of detournment, the mail art network is in the habit of working freely with products found in their letterboxes. The only interest the art establishment would find in telecomputing would be to organize databanks of paintings with price information intended for mainframes questioned through slave-terminals. This is completely different from networks of home-based micro-computers calling each other by modem, running sometimes as hosts and sometimes not. Here is the difference between centralized and decentralized systems.

The problem of original art has been a long-standing issue within the art market. It is possible that these issues of what constitutes modern painting are entirely inadequate to the new sensibility of our time, which needs instant reproduction capabilities, high transmission speed and interactivity where images can be shaped, produced, copied, dispatched, transformed or destroyed through various games.

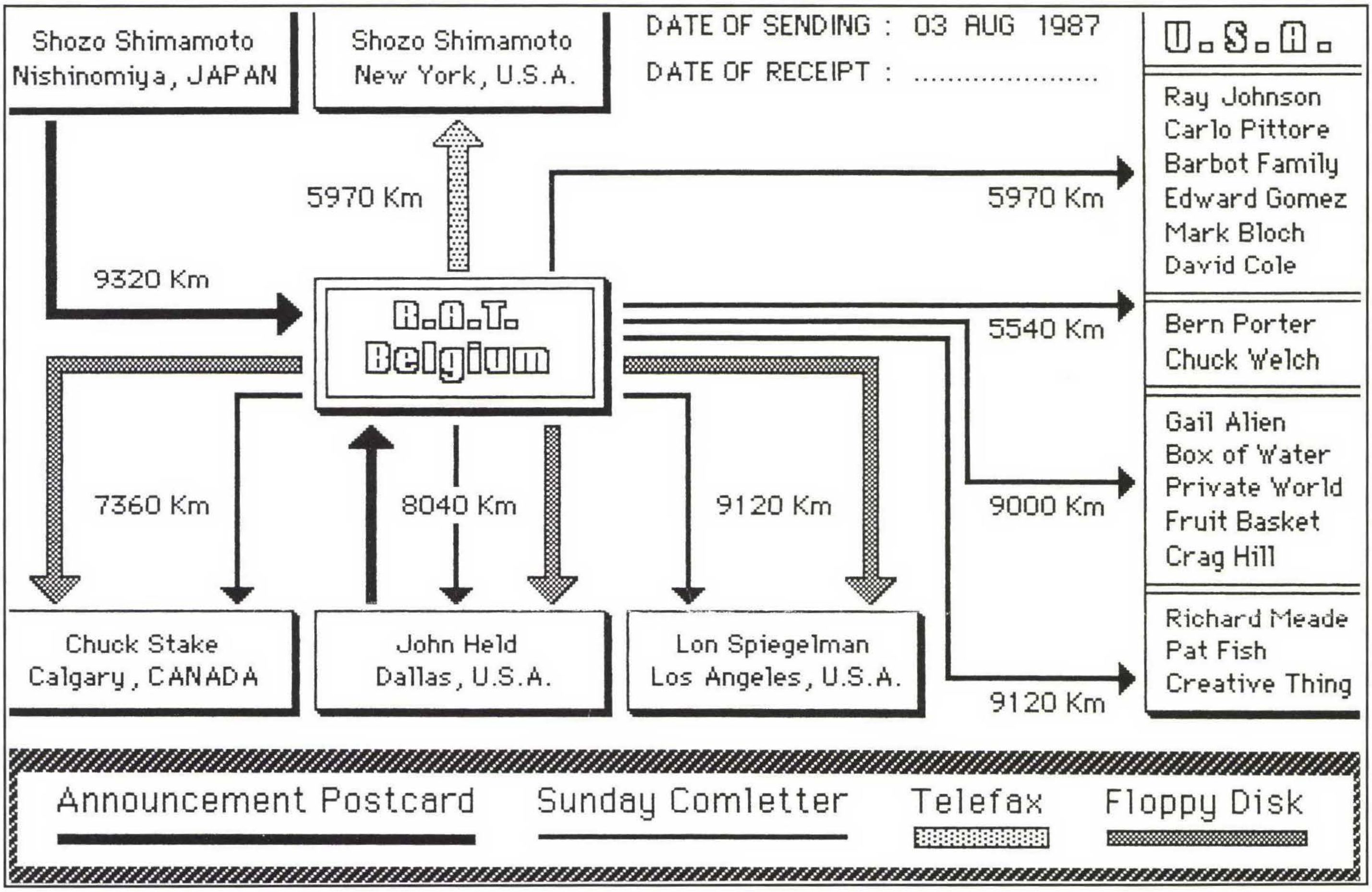


Figure 75. Charles Francois, *Shozo in America*, Belgium. A 1993 remake of Charles Francois' 1987 networking computer movie of the itinerary of Japanese mail art networker Shozo Shimamoto.

The mail art network operates like a big game running through mini-games called projects. Invitations, creations, texts and lists become artifacts that link actors together in the experiential sharing of ever-changing sensibilities. It is unlikely that mail artists will be stopped by the art establishment's fetish for original art, but the traditional behaviour towards original work will most certainly discourage many other artists from exploring the new tools of technological communication. How will these reluctant artists deal with the fact that an original piece of artwork introduced in a RAM lacks any guarantee against copy or alteration?

For some time mail artists have shared a kind of piracy ethic, a tradition that should prosper without problems in the computer world. These shared and pirated images are certain to fit as pieces of a big theater puzzle that will be run and recreated by every owner of a micro-computer. Scenarios could be written as empty structures without actors, which could be filled/played in any form sent by post. Lurking within this new kind of communication and aesthetic sensibility are *viruses*. Might the virus serve in some way as an artistic, non-aggressive effect upon communication? Perhaps this statement will be considered too provocative by today's standards, but I have introduced the idea to show that communication art could have some very surprising aspects in the future.

Whether mail artists own a computer or not, it is obvious that the strategic data fueling their network engine will remain lists of addresses and project invitations. Such documentation will continue to provide

access to network entry plus accountability of those who are still active in network exchanges. Copy machines have played an important part in the dissemination of show documentation and address lists, but computers are more than tools for spreading information; they are also organizing tools where information can be treated quickly to allow all forms of listing and mailing operations. Inevitably, the future of mail art will continue to be centered on larger numbers of show lists in circulation around the world.

Lists generated by the mail art network introduce new problems of artistic identity. When we have spoken of known and unknown mail artists it wasn't in terms of fame, but only as a reference of accountability on past and present world-wide mail art lists. Almost anybody can be present on a mail art list, and anybody can produce or spread these lists. This is not in the same paradigm in which some art critics deal with individuals. Their purpose is to define and judge art and artifacts. They are unlikely to give credence to any process which allows all people to be artists and where all artists are treated as equals. This problem could be eliminated by saying that the mail art phenomenon is not art, but such a statement will be harder to justify as the mail art phenomenon grows larger and more vocal in its criticism of the art establishment.

In this latter context it would be easy to imagine an art world divided into two parts. On one side, traditional artists would continue to produce marketable artifacts well suited to dealers' interests. These artists would continue to function without any cognizance of a new sensibility in telecommunication or other creative, interactive processes. On the other side will be a league of art workers with cosmic-minded consciousness of inter-connected people. These networking artists will share control, administration, and curatorial functions in a huge, pulsating, spiritual sculpture: an invisible kind of final work that is without creator, without price and without copyright.

In conclusion, my purpose was to stress aspects of mail art that arise out of technology. The micro-computer, in particular, should enhance networking in the 1990s the same way Xerox did between 1970 and1985. Xerox, however, was only a tool to expand the paper world. The digital world has the capacity to mix worlds of creative expression into unique forms and to immediately transmit these ideas throughout the planet.

Xerox technology allowed for the massification of the mail-art phenomenon, and, in turn, helped to introduce a concrete basis for global networking. Mail art networking introduces new questions and new behaviors, but above all, it defines a new artistic identity that has little to do with art-market networking. In this essay I have discussed how micro-computers enable artists the capacity to quickly spread, produce and reproduce ideas. We have explored the future of ever-changing technologies where mail artists will encounter constant discovery. With the help of these new technologies and discoveries, mail artists of the present and future will emerge as planetary networking citizens.

* * * * * *

1. The author's original draft of this text is available on request.
2. Fricker and Ruch's International Mail Art Congresses frequently used the term "networking" for describing a decentralized global strategy of informal congress meetings wherever "two or more people meet to discuss personal experiences and general problems concerning networking." For extensive documentation about networking and the International Mail Art Congresses, read Günther Ruch's *Clinch Magazine*, Geneva, Switzerland, Nos. 7-8, 1985 - 1986.
3. (Ed. note:) Apple Inc. introduced their lowest priced personal

computer, the Macintosh Classic, on 16 October 1990. According to the Apple Co. chief executive officer, John Sculley, the Mac Classic was priced just under $1,000 so that "From this moment forward, the Macintosh will reach more people than ever before." Company officials believed that lower-priced Macintosh machines will "drive future growth." In 1990, Macintosh Company held about nine percent of the international personal computer as compared to fifteen percent in the mid-1980s. Apparently, competitive marketing is helping direct personal computer technology into an affordable arena "Apple Eyes Big Future with New Computer," *The Boston Globe*, October 16, 1990, 43.

4. "Votre Macintosh au bout du fil," *SVM Macintosh*, January, 1990, 8:103. This is the French version of the famous US magazine *Mac User* and the article refers to a survey made in the USA by the Apple company.

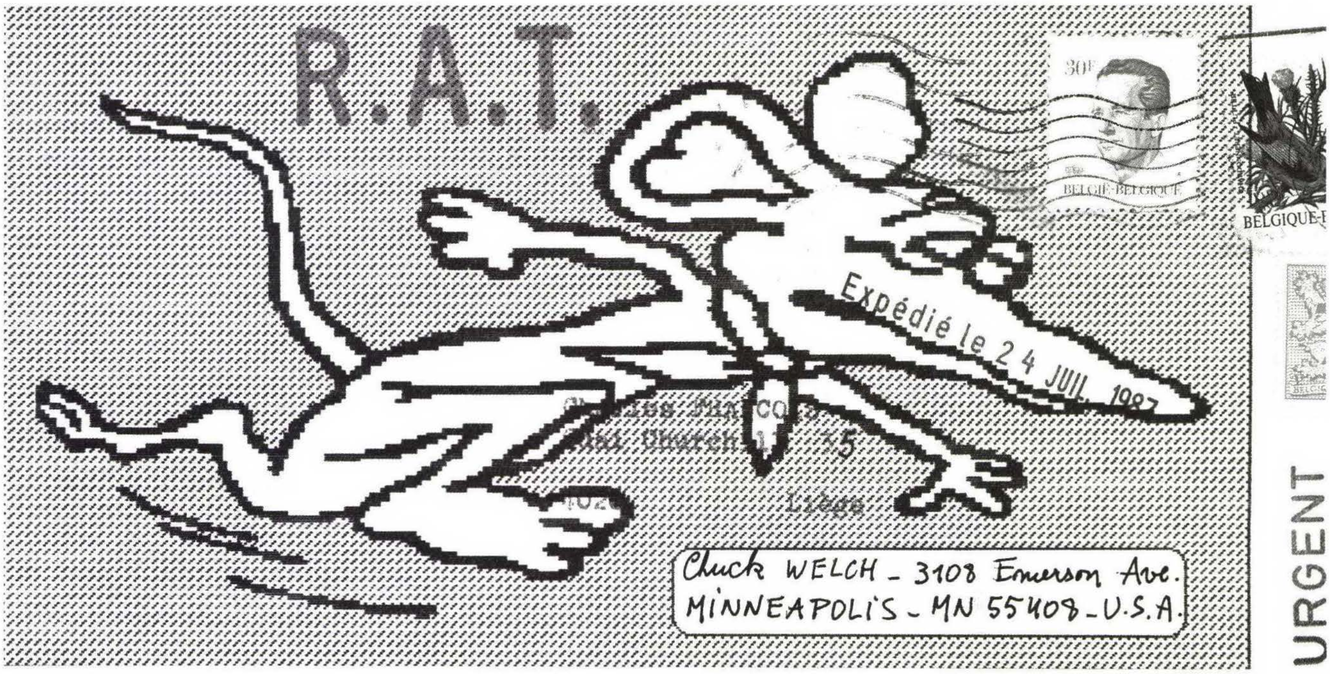


Figure 76. Charles Francois, *R.A.T. Logo*, Belgium, 1987. R.A.T. is Charles Francois' acronym for Research in Art and Telecommunication, also referred to as R.A.T.O.S., Research in Art and Telecommunication On-line Service. R.A.T.O.S. began in 1989 as one of mail art's first host operated computer Bulletin Board Services.



Figure 77. Tim Mancusi, *Telenetlink*, U.S.A., 1994. Collage cover design for Crackerjack Kid's November 1994 publication of *Netshaker*, a special issue devoted to the 1995 Networker Telenetlink.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 17

THE MAIL ART–INTERNET LINK

PROPOSING A 1995 NETWORKER TELENETLINK

Chuck Welch

What is Telenetlink?

"Tele" is a Greek word for "far off," "at a distance." Netlink is terminology meaning "to interconnect networks," especially communication networks that are perceived to be distant. Artists impart attitudes, values, and sensibilities in their shared communication with others. Aesthetic sensibilities, when coupled with social hierarchy and economic inequality, create media boundaries, "netclubs." Mail art networking attempts to soar above these distances, to fly beyond all media boundaries—to telenetlink!

Mail art is communication that travels a physical/spiritual distance between senders and recipients. For nearly forty years mail artists have been enjoying interactive mail characterized by free, open, often spirited visual/textual correspon*dances*. Mail artists have worked hard to abolish copyrights through dispersed authorship. In the distant, parallel world of high technology, telecommunication artists often work in the same collaborative fabric interwoven with mail art. But e-mail artists network online in a simulated, textual, paperless world. No wonder there are mail artists who prefer the tangible, tactile, handcrafted encounter of pen, pencil, collage, paint, and handmade paper.

It is true that some postal artists are suspicious of art and technology. They view telecommunications as hasty, simulated, impersonal interaction lacking in privacy. These mail artists find the time-lag of postal delivery a desirable quality. Conversely, there are telecommunication artists who view mail artists as unskilled in aesthetic differentiation, hopelessly lost in a slow, antiquated, and expensive postal bureaucracy. Distances widen between these communication forms, especially by the stilted influences of normative art standards. Such attitudes obscure the notion that art communication is an intermedia concept.

The Artist As Networker

Distance between mail art and electronic art is sometimes more imagined than real. The notion that mail artists are hostile to high technology is one common misconception. Experimentation with mass-media technology hastened the evolution of mail art long before the advent of telecommunications technology. Mail artists experimented with electrostatic (copier art) technology in the1960s and in the late 1980s embraced the technology of telefacsimile. Throughout the 1980s mail artists matured into networkers who reached for an inter-cultural transformation of information.

Mail art networkers experience the form and content of the information age. They dare to apply values that will nurture a larger global society. It comes as no surprise that pioneering telecommunication artists like Judy Malloy, Carl Eugene Loeffler, and Fred Truck were all active mail artists during the early 1970s before they moved towards telecommunications art. Time has obscured the fact that many idealistic, democratic values of early mail art were carried forth in the development of today's on-line telecommunications community.

Networkers use both telecommunications and mail art as tools rather than boundaries. These intermedia networkers embrace immediate, direct concepts of exchange that sometimes lead to real-time, face-to-face conferences. Networkers are equally comfortable using the postal mailstream to meet vicariously as "tourists." The hallmark of both mail and telecommunications art resides in attitudes of creative freedom, collaboration, and independence outside mainstream art systems. Telenetlink is a forum created to celebrate this interactive spirit between mail art and telecommunications artists.

Evolution of the Telenetlink Project

The international Telenetlink evolved in June 1991 as an interactive part of Reflux Network Project, an artists' telecommunication system created by Brazilian artist Dr. Artur Matuck. Reflux Network Project was an ambitious, progressive experiment that interconnected 24 on-site nodes located in university art departments, art research sites, and private internet addresses. Through Reflux, the Networker Telenetlink became mail art's first active on-line connection with the world of Internet.

Telenetlink became an active component of mail art's Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congresses, 1992 (NC92). Throughout 1992 the Telenetlink Project functioned as the only continuously active on-line mail art resource in which the role of the networker was actively discussed. An international community of mail art and "Internet-workers" were introduced to each other before and during the NC92 Telenetlink. Telenetlink's e-mailart addresses were first actively exchanged in an international scale by Reed Altemus (Cumberland, Maine) and me. This list has grown exponentially through mail art magazine e-mail lists from Ashley Parker Owen's *Global Mail.* (now on-line with her CompuServe address), Mark Corroto's *Face* and by Telenetlink's continued e-mail connections to Internet, *ArtCom*, *Post Modern Culture Electronic Journal*, and numerous other on-line sources.

Some mail artists claim that the 250 sessions of Networker Congresses in 1992 were carbon copies of the smaller 1986 Mail Art Congresses. But NC92 differed from the 1986 Mail Art Congresses in a major context. Participants in the 1992 Networker Congresses were challenged to inter-act with other marginal networks parallel to mail art; to build, expand, introduce, alert, and interconnect underground network cultures. These objectives were underscored when the Networker Telenetlink bridged the telecommunications art community and the mail art culture. I chose Internet as the focal point for understanding the role of the networker. Why Internet? Because it is the world's largest information superhighway that is moving art towards new communication concepts.

The Mail Art–Internet Link

Internet is a parallel world to mail art, but Telenetlink envisioned mail art as e-mailart; an effective global tool for electronically altering art images, building network interaction, assembling large numbers of people for on-line conferences and creative workshops. Already, Internet is a moving, virtual world of over 12 million people networking from an estimated 1.7 million computers in over 135 nations including the former Soviet Union. Internet was paid for and created in 1972 by the U.S. Defense Department's ARPAnet, built to survive a Soviet missle attack on the U.S. Today nobody (yet!) governs Internet save its individual member networks. Anybody from senior citizens to average working people can play "keypal" with the establishment or underground network cultures.



Figure 78. Crackerjack Kid, *Fax Trauma*, U.S.A., 1992. Collage.

Internet relays over 900 on-line newsgroup networks with subjects ranging from books and fishing to alternative sex. Telenetlink made connections with Internet's Usenet Newsgroups when NC92 invitations and updates were circulated via alt.artcom, rec.arts.fine, and the Well. Through these connections hundreds of networker congress messages were exchanged on-line. Decentralized and fit for global congress conferences, Internet was the conference table where mail artists and telecommunication artists were introduced to each other. Global e-mailart was birthed on Internet.

Clearly, more discussion, strategies and Internet-action are welcome in the Networker Telenetlink 1995. Increasing network interaction is an important first step. In 1991 there were roughly two or three dozen mail artists with PCs and modems, mostly Americans, who could access one another through information superhighways like Internet, Bitnet, CompuServe and America Online. In 1994 the Telenetlink 1995 organized mail art FAXcilitators and many on-line connections to Internet organized by Telenetlink operators like Dorothy Harris (America Online, artoposto@aol.com), Jonathan Giles (New York City's BBS Echo, gilestv@echonyc), Honoria, (Internet, honoria@ccwf.cc.utexas.edu), Bandes Dessinee (Internet, bdnee@bronze.lcs.mit.edu), and many others.

Telenetlinks, Outernets & Electronic Bulletin Boards

Between late 1991 and 1993 an on-line community of rubber stampers often discussed rubber stamp art and listed mail art shows over the commercial Prodigy network. Prodigy networker Dorothy Harris, a.k.a. "Arto Posto," was active in organizing the first on-line mail art course for beginners. Unfortunately, interaction on Prodigy was limited to American participants who had no access to the larger global Internet system. Eventually, access to Internet was made possible by Prodigy in November 1993. By that time Prodigy's rates had increased, causing most rubber stampers to quit the network.

The same form of "CorrespondencE-mail" exchanges found on Prodigy were predated by three Mail Art BBS' organized by Mark Block (US), Charles Francois (Belgium), and Ruud Janssen (the Netherlands). These BBS "outernets" each had its own set of services and protocols for initiating on-line dialogue, remote login, file transfer, and message posting. Like Prodigy, however, access to mail art BBSs remains costly and cumbersome.

Mail art Bulletin Board Services are host-operated netlinks akin to private mail art correspon*dancing*—anybody can cut in, but you have to follow your partner's lead if you want to be in their dance. "Outermail" BBSs are

capable of establishing e-mail gateways to the Internet. Mail art BBSs will likely follow in this direction as the advantages of Internet become more evident. At present, however, only electronic mail "gateways" can move messages between "outernets" and Internet—a limitation that will surely change as a global matrix evolves.

Since 1991, Telenetlink continues to nurture a deep, transpersonal, inter-cultural community of networkers who explore both high and low technology. Strategies for the dispersal of Telenetlink have been widespread and include the March 1994 mailings by Swiss Networker Hans Ruedi Fricker. Thousands of copies of the Telenetlink proposal were distributed in *ND Magazine,* Issue No. 18, and in the September 1993 issue of Crackerjack Kid's *Netshaker Zine*.

Netshaker On-Line, became Internet's first mail art cyberspace electronic magazine on January 1, 1994 when Crackerjack Kid organized a group of Telenetlink facilitators who forwarded *Netshaker On-Line* to Prodigy, CompuServe, and America Online subscribers. Issued bi-monthly, *Netshaker On-Line* is accessible by contacting Crackerjack Kid at CathrynL.Welch@dartmouth.edu or by mailing inquiries to P.O. Box 978, Hanover, NH 03755. A hard copy version of *Netshaker* is available by writing to *Netshaker*, P.O. Box 978, Hanover, NH.

Other active discussions of Telenetlink occurred in public congresses during 1994. Free Dogs & Humans Values, an Italian festival of alternative creativity, convened at several sites in and around Florence, Italy from May 5–15, 1994. Organized by Gianni Broi and Ennio Pauluzzi, the Free Dog sessions included Gianni Broi's reading of the Telenetlink proposal and widespread distribution of the text in Italy and Europe.

Reid Wood of Oberlin, Ohio has organized a 1995 Telenetlink Fax Project entitled *Eye re:CALL.* Participants include mail artists and cybespace artists alike; John Fowler, Karl Joung, John Held, Ashley Parker Owens, Greg Little, Wayne Draznin, Artoposto, Rafael Courtoisie, Guy Bleus, Ruggero Maggi, Jean-Francois Robic, and the author, among many others.

The Networker Telenetlink remains an open proposal to all interested parties. Embracing the possibility of enlarging network community, developing e-mailart as an expressive on-line medium, and discussing new roles are necessary and welcome. Please help by dispersing this message by mail or e-mail. Translation of this invitation into other languages is also desirable.

NETWORKER TELENETLINK 1995: THE OPEN PROPOSAL

THE MAIL ART CONGRESS BODY LEFT IN 1992/A SPIRIT NETWORKS NOW/THE SPIRIT LIVES IN EVERYONE/WE MET-A-NETWORK INFANT/A MEDIA-CHILD WAS BORN/TELENETLINK IS ITS NAME/IT LIVES IN NETLAND NOW/THE FUTURE OF THE NETWORKER IS TELENETLINKED/MAIL ART IS EMAILART/FAXMAIL ART/EMBRACE THE CHILD/ TELENETLINK IN '95!

OPEN OBJECTIVES

Objectives for a Networker Telenetlink Year in 1995 are open for discussion through 1994. Possibilities? Embrace the telematic medium and explore its parameters, develop a local/global community, exchange cultural communications, interconnect the parallel network worlds of mail art and telematic art through Internet, CompuServe, America Online, Bitnet, and other connected e-mail gateways, place networker archives on-line, experiment with telematic technology, participate as a FAXcilitator, exhibit, interact in public and private forums, merge media: mail and e-mail, and enact networker ideals envisioned for the millennium.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 18

THE FUTURE OF MAIL ART

Judith Hoffberg

In this constantly shrinking universe, the mail artist has found a way to communicate through the international postal system, a system that up to now has remained constant and basically similar in most countries, except for an occasional upstart strike, delay, or transitional mode. At that time, mail delivery in certain countries has lagged or been stopped due to political situations that were unforeseen.

The growth and development of new communication devices such as e-mail and fax machines may change the way we all communicate. It may not be a hand-delivered situation anymore, but one that is instantaneous and electronic. As a result, the visual document that has been used to communicate through the normal channels may evolve into a less hand-made but more forthright message.

Yet, can we change the original intent of mail art, or at least that which has evolved into a creative spirit crossing all barriers and creating new bridges of understanding? This kind of global connectedness has created a type of familial community, global and creative, which communicates in all spheres—expressive, cognitive and practical.

In the past decade, much has transpired in the mail art world that gives cause to question a great deal of this positive feeling for the future. Are artists, indeed, networking, or is mail art just another form of the self-interest which characterized much of the Eighties? Or are there two groups of mail artists: those who do it for self-aggrandizement or fun and those who are serious artists who find their medium, correspondence art, an ideal form of process aesthetics, encouraging effective, purposeful, inclusive networking strategies?

I maintain that the great surge of activity in the 1970s and early 1980s, the energy that was provoked by political social, and aesthetic issues, made mail art a serious endeavor for many artists, one that gave freedom to those who were otherwise shackled by economic or political concerns and allowed them to pursue their aesthetic concerns. Mail art became a vehicle for free expression of global concerns: the environment, repression by some governments, the women's movement, travel, free speech, etc. Mail art created new friends, formulated bridges of understanding, broke down language barriers, and sometimes even developed great events such as InterDada '80 in California and later mail art congresses throughout the world.

But postage rates have increased to such an extent that it becomes too expensive to do a great deal of mail art. Mail artists are now very selective and send mail art to a few select shows. One would have hoped that the quality of mail art would increase as the quantity decreased, but that is not always the case.

The art market has made some long-standing mail artists conscious of the worth of their archives. Highly developed and organized, the archives of some mail artists are often found in obscure museums and institutions, which have taken them as a courtesy rather than a commitment. We'll be seeing many more institutions seeking mail art archives for their own collections.

Strategies have changed, and a new group of mail artists with no sense of the history that has gone before use new technologies as well. Armed with computers, computer graphics, fax machines, videotapes and videodiscs, mail art will indeed change in the 1990s. Those of us who have added to the paper revolution will either change our ways, or succumb electronically to the year 2000 and all that it may hold. Whatever happens, the past has been prologue to creative networks, new friendships, international understanding, and a heightened sense of what freedom really means. May we keep the walls down and the networks *open*!

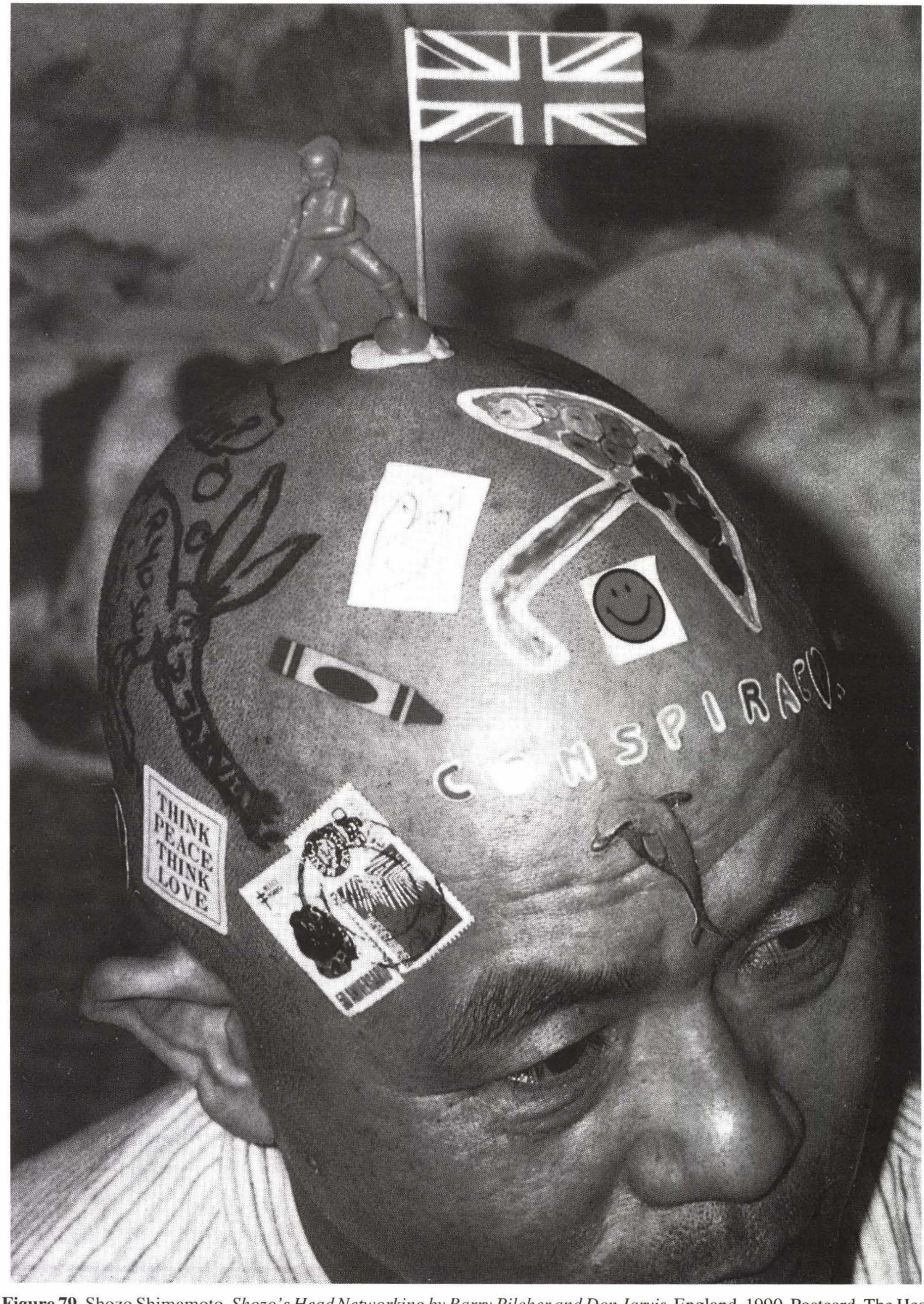


Figure 79. Shozo Shimamoto, *Shozo's Head Networking by Barry Pilcher and Don Jarvis*, England, 1990. Postcard. The Head Networking performance took place in the home of Barry Pilcher, London, England on August 2, 1990. The event was also a part of Shozo Shimamoto's *Sacred Run for Peace*. Photograph by Mayumi Handa.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 19

THREE OVERTURES TO NETWORKING

Shozo Shimamoto

I: The Tropical Forest is an Archetype of Art

The tropical forest is a living, torrid zone of grass, ferns and moss, of thick ivy and vines climbing ancient trees. A variety of creatures from large mammals to small insects and fish swarm within the forest. Animals feed on ants living in dead trees, plants feed on insects, and bacteria thrive in an organic cycle that produces oxygen for the sustenance of life on Earth. The ecosystem of a tropical forest is an epitome of the laws of the Earth in that every creature living in it has a role in its growth.

But since the dawn of our species, we have dichotomized nature into useful and harmful elements. We have created various tools and devices to consume Earth's natural resources and have driven out or destroyed the natural order of plant and animal life. In this alteration of nature, humankind has created a comfortable society and habitat. We have also carelessly and unnecessarily harmed ourselves and our environment.

This dichotomy of nature may be true of almost everything. When we devise, produce, and improve something we are apt to end up with disadvantages. If nature is not damaged seriously, the Earth can recover; however, the destruction of nature, such as the continuing depletion of rain forests, is far beyond Earth's self-curing capacity. This is a sinful act. Such foolish sins can also be seen in the world of art.

In the past, a number of artists created superb works and enriched humanity's spiritual life, but we should not forget the fact that such art relies on small art that is analogous to small insects living in the tropical forest. Moreover, these small insects are doing their best to survive. A Japanese saying has it that even a worm has its own will. However small it may be, a thing has its unique value

The situation of mail art can be compared exactly to the tropical forest. There are some cedar groves in Kyoto, Japan, where upright trees called *kitayamasugi* grow, and these places are often publicized as beautiful forested areas. But in my opinion, they actually are dead groves with trees that are considered useful only for human beings. What we should keep in mind is that the beauty of the *kitayamasugi* groves depends entirely on the existence of the tropical rain forest.

Mail art has various forms. Individual artists create and mail their own art. This mailed art isn't to be collected in one place to be ranked and priced. Some pieces of mail art are beyond my comprehension, while others would seem meaningless to my spiritual life. But all the varieties of mail art are equally valuable. The way mail art is sent through international networking channels can be compared exactly to the workings of the rain forest.

Now people are aware of the foolishness of the destruction of nature and begin to realize the value of the rain forest. Under such circumstances, we have come to appreciate the significance of mail art networking, which challenges the hierarchical realm of post-modernism in art.

II: The Development of Networking

On August 2, 1990, Ryosuke Cohen, Mayumi Handa, and I participated in the *Sacred Run* led by American Indian activist Dennis Banks (Fig. 80). In his fight for Indian rights, Banks played a leading role in the 1973 battle of Wounded Knee on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in



Figure 80. Shozo Shimamoto, *Sacred Run for Peace,* Japan. 1990. (Left to Right) Dennis Banks, Shozo Shimamoto, and Tom Lablanc gather at Art Space in Nishinomiya, Japan. Unusual mail art objects hang on the wall in the background.

South Dakota. The battle was televised worldwide and won the support of many people, including the American film star and celebrity Marlon Brando.

As a leading figure in the American Indian Movement, Banks in recent years has organized support for the environment and Indian rights with teams of runners from across the United States and Japan. The August, 1990, *Sacred Run* was planned as a relay from London, England, to Moscow via the Baltic States, Sweden, Norway, and Finland. The total distance of the relay was about 8,000 kilometers. *Sacred Run* was conceived as a way for people from various countries to meet one another and to exchange views. Each person could wish for their own survival as well as for that of the diseased Earth. While running with other participants, I invited local mail artists to join us, and together we tried to devise new ways of networking.

On August 5, an event was staged at Milton Keynes in the surburbs of London. The next day, on the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, we started *Sacred Run.* One of the London-based mail artists, Barry Edgar Pilcher, wrote music for the run and played it on his saxophone together with his group, Conspiracy. Just before



Figure 81. (Left to Right) Mayumi Handa, Kinami, Ryosuke Cohen, and Shozo Shimamoto during *Sacred Run*, August 10, 1990, Paris, France. Photograph by NATO.

the performance started, Dennis Banks began explaining the idea behind the run as he had done in Paris, Berlin, and in many other places. I thought this was a really nice way of attracting other people's attention. Native Americans appeared before us with plenty of feathers on their heads and backs. A number of families picnicking nearby flocked to the event to see them drumming and shouting. Later, hundreds of local people took part in the dancing.

The French mail artist, NATO, organized our networking activities in Paris. He told me that he became a mail artist after being impressed by my art. It would seldom happen in any other world other than mail art that a contemporary French artist would be influenced by Japanese art. NATO wanted to make a plastic figure of me in celebration of *Sacred Run*. He applied a coat of silicone resin to my head as he began a performance of nude women moving around me. One woman sat on my head during her performance. Mail artworks were posted on the nude women during the performance; a rather unique form of art display.

We drove a remodeled truck from London to Warsaw that was covered with paintings and messages sent by mail artists from all over the world. I shaved my head and had many slides projected on it. I also had mail artists draw pictures and write messages on my head. In Belgium and the Soviet Union, local artists were so meticulous in their pictures and messages on my head that I realized what delicate national traits they have.

More than 1,000 envelopes of mail art were hung as an exhibition by Belgian mail artist Charles Francois. Joki, a mail artist from Minden, Germany, piled up over 1,000 pieces of mail art, and I buried myself in this pile, scattering mail art over my shaved head.

Banks' *Sacred Run* was a magnificent event that included mail art as an important, collaborative element. In the future, he plans to continue the relay across Africa, North and South America. "Sacred Run" is networking that enables participants and spectators to think about dealing with social problems, wars and the environment. Here, networking mail art releases art from the frame of tradition into the outer space surrounding the frame.

Networking in Worlds Other Than Art

In the last networking overture, we described how networking was combined with Dennis Bank's *Sacred Run*. Networking, however, is also possible in worlds other than art. Historically, "networking" is a term that was developed in the 1970s by artists hoping for the liberation of art. It isn't the invention of one brilliant artist, but, rather,

an invention that comes into being through the exchange of mail art. The networking of art has been advanced by artistic feeling, but I happen to know of another world where networking has been theoretically discussed.

In December 1989, Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, a couple researching networking, came to Japan from the U.S. They argued that there is no need for superstars in political or economic activities in the world. They said that politics or economies should be maintained through networking. The Japanese version of their book, *Networking,* was published in 1986 and created a sensation in Japan. I bought the book and found a key idea in it that advised people not to "speculate."[1]

I thought that the fundamental difference between mail art networking and conventional art was an attitude toward the concept of speculation. I have never written or talked about it, but I have always held the view that conventional art is full of speculations by individuals seeking wealth, importance, and opportunity. Artists who are engaged in creating such art are competing with each other and have plenty of speculations in mind as they reach for the top of the ladder of success.

I had pictures taken of my shaved head that were printed on paper, and for two years these sheets were distributed to mail artists around the world. As a form of collaborative mail art networking, I printed instructions on these sheets asking mail artists to intervene by placing their pictures and messages on my head and returning the altered work. While this networking project was making progress, Cor Reyn, a Dutch artist, began creating the same networking strategy with the same prints I had mailed. S.P.E.A.T., an American mail artist, was asked by Cor Reyn to draw eleven small pictures of my shaved head in the prints. Now S.P.E.A.T. is networking with this variation of my original idea. Ironically, he sent one of the prints to me and asked me to participate in his networking strategy. Crackerjack Kid modeled handmade paper castings from a plaster life casting of my shaved head and sent several dozen foam-filled sculptures of my head around the world.

If any of these kinds of things happened in the conventional art world, grave consequences would be inevitable. In the worst case, a lawsuit could be filed for plagiarism. But I am grateful to these artists because they are expanding a shared networking concept. My sides shook with laughter when I found these artists using my shaved head for their networking. The world of mail art networking is full of humorous events and stories.

At the time when Lipnack and Stamp's *Networking* was the talk of the town, I was sending mail art as the shape of the first letter in the Japanese alphabet. This first letter in the Japanese alphabet is a character imbued with creative meaning, and I use it in my artistic activities because it is very beautiful. The letter was made from corrugated paper covered with seals or stamps and sent through the mail without an envelope. I mailed this corrugated paper symbol under separate cover to Lipnack and Stamps with a note explaining the aim of mail art networking. At that time, they were about to publish their magazine, *Networking Journal*, and they seemed surprised to find that there was another form of networking, other than business, in the world of art. They took a keen interest in my mail art and used the Japanese symbol on the first issue of their magazine.[2] The fact that mail art, politics, and business can all share the world of networking stimulated me.

In November 1989, Ryosuke Cohen, Mayumi Handa, and I had dinner with Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps and talked about networking:[3]

Shimamoto: I have read your book, *Networking*. The book has nothing to do with art, but I found your principles of networking described in it very interesting and stimulating when they are applied to art.

Stamps: Americans have so far thought that their culture is the most advanced. As such, the idea of cooperating with other peoples in the world through networking is very innovative. In Japan, people tend to put emphasis on a spirit of cooperation in a group, and their culture distinctly reflects such mentality. The reverse has been the case in the U.S., but a desire for cooperation in a group is now being aroused among Americans. This contrast between the two countries is intriguing for networking.[4]

Jessica Lipnack told us that the most advanced networking is now being carried out by those in business circles, not by those engaged in social service. I think this is a most suggestive phenomenon. Now people in various worlds are reconsidering the methodology of networking. How might a new paradigm of networking in business and art evolve with less competition and more global cooperation among individuals? I, working and belonging to the world of art, take delight in striving toward furthering new networking concepts and hope that through creative projects such as *Sacred Run*, individuals are empowered to heal the Earth. A new networking consciousness, as suggested by Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamp, may allow for the imagination and vision that will bridge worlds in collaboration and cooperation. These overtures to networking are humankind's bold future and destiny.

* * * * * *

1. (Ed. note:) Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, *The Networking Book: People Connecting with People*, New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986. Here, Shimamoto is comparing "speculation" with ambition and competition. Interestingly, I could not find this "key idea" in the English edition of *The Networking Book*. On calling Jessica Lipnack about Shimamoto's reference, she replied that the Japanese translation of their book had been incorrectly translated in several passages.
2. Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, "Creation in the Mailbox," *Networking Journal*, Spring/Summer, 1985, I: 1, 3–4.
3. The networking conversation among Jessica Lipnack, Jeffrey Stamps, and Mayumi Handa was interpreted for Lipnack and Stamps by *Kyoto Journal* reporter Dave Kubiak.
4. From notes by Shozo Shimamoto with Jeffrey Stamps, Jessica Lipnack and Mayumi Handa on November 25, 1990 in Kyoto, Japan.

* * * * * *



ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 20

ABOUT ART STRIKE

Stewart Home

While the Art Strike was not conceived as a mail art project, many of the fifty or so individuals who have been engaged in propagating it have close ties with the Eternal Network. As such, Art Strike raises issues that are of pertinence to mail artists and points to ways international networking can be used to give voice to radical social perspectives.

The Concept

The 1990 Art Strike was called as a means of encouraging critical debate around the concept of art.[1] While certain individuals will put down their tools and cease to make, distribute, sell, exhibit or discuss their cultural work for a three-year period beginning on 1st January 1990, the numbers involved will be so small that the strike is unlikely to force the closure of any galleries or other art institutions. It will, however, demonstrate that the socially imposed hierarchy of the arts can be aggressively challenged.

Art as a category must be distinguished from music, painting, writing, etc. Current usage of the term "art" treats it as a sub-category of these disciplines, one which differentiates between parts of them on the basis of *perceived values*. Thus, the music of John Cage is considered art, while that of Madonna is not. Therefore, when we use the term art we're invoking a distinction between different musics, paintings, works of fiction, etc., one which ranks the items to be found within these categories into a hierarchy.

Given the diversity of objects, texts, and compositions that are said to be art, it seems reasonable to conclude that there is no common denominator among these art works that can be used as criteria for deciding what should or should not be considered art. What distinguishes the object is the particular set of social and institutional relationships that are to be found around it. Put another way, art is whatever those in a position of cultural power say is art.

One of the purposes of the Art Strike is to draw attention to the process by which works of art are legitimated. Those artists and administrators in the privileged position of deciding what is and what is not art constitute a specific faction of the ruling class. They promote art as a superior form of knowledge and simultaneously use it as a means of celebrating the *objective superiority* of their own way of life on the basis that they are committed to art. Appreciation of art is generally used as a mark of distinction, privilege and taste.

The Precedents

There are innumerable ways I could discuss the Art Strike. This is an important point because one of the purposes of The Years Without Art is to bring into relief the means by which various mental sets and forms of discourse are legitimated and how individuals, objects, texts, etc., are situated within them. A brief outline of the various projects that have been labelled as Art Strikes follows.

The earliest use I've found of the term "Art Strike" is in Alain Jouffroy's essay "What's to be done about art?" (included in *Art and Confrontation*, New York Graphic Society, 1968):

Figure 82. (Left) *Stewart Home Performing Water Symphony*, England, 1989. A performance based on a three-part script by Stewart Home. The same photograph of Home appears in the Plagiarism Special of *Smile, Issue 11*, 1989. Photograph by David Tiffen.

> ...the abolition of art can really occur in the actual time and space of a pre-revolutionary situation like that of May 1968. It is essential that the minority advocate the necessity of going on an active art strike using the machines of the culture industry so that we can more effectively set it in total contradiction with itself. The intention is not to end the rule of production, but to change the most adventurous part of 'artistic' production into the production of revolutionary ideas, forms and techniques.

The problem with this proposal is that without ending the rule of production, avant-garde artists would simply swap one privileged role for another. Instead of providing entertainment for a *privileged* audience, artists are to form themselves into a vanguard providing ideas, forms and techniques for the *masses*. While such a role may be attractive to artists, it does nothing to alter the oppressive domination of a so called *creative* elite over the rest of society.

The New York Art Strike Against War, Repression and Racism was a coalition of artists, dealers, museum officials, and other members of the art community. Among other things, it called for a one-day closure of galleries and museums on May 22, 1970, with optional continuance for two weeks. On that day the Whitney, the Jewish Museum and a number of galleries closed, while the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum suspended their admission charges. While some of the aims of the New York Art Strike were laudable (such as protesting against the war in Vietnam), its supporters also used it as a vehicle for strengthening the privileged position artists occupy within contemporary society. However, the New York Art Strikers soon broke into dissenting factions, and their movement was moribund before the end of 1970.

The next proposal for an art strike came from Gustav Metzger. Writing in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition Art Into Society/Society Into Art (ICA, London, 1974), he called upon artists to support a three-year art strike that would run between 1977 and 1980. The idea was to attack the way the art world was organized rather than to question the status of art; however, Metzger was unable to rally support for his plan, presumably because most artists lack any sense of mutual self-interest that would enable them to act in solidarity with others.

In February 1979, Goran Dordevic mailed a circular asking a variety of Yugoslavian and English-speaking artists if they would take part in an International Art Strike to protest against repression and the fact that artists were alienated from the fruits of their labour. Dordevic received forty replies of which the majority expressed doubts about the possibility of putting the International Art Strike into practice. Because so few artists were prepared to pledge their support, Dordevic abandoned his plan for an International Art Strike.

In Eastern Europe, where cultural work is totally professionalized, there have been successful strike actions by artists. During martial law in Poland artists refused to exhibit work in state galleries, leaving the ruling elite without an official culture. More recently, in Prague, 500 actors, theater managers and stage directors were among those who announced a week-long strike to protest state violence. Instead of giving performances, actors proposed to lead audiences in discussions of the situation (see "New Protest in Prague Follows Beating Death," *New York Times*, November 19, 19890. That artists are sometimes prepared to use their privileged position for what many would view as laudable ends, however, does not place them above criticism.

Networking the 1990 Art Strike

The 1990 Art Strike was publicly announced in a flyer I issued during the summer of 1985. Further information appeared in issues of *Smile* magazine and a succession of

Figure 83. (Right) Stewart Home, *Smile Cover, No 10*, England, 1987.

SMILE

Issue 10 UK 60p US $2 Smash The Imagination



SEX WITHOUT SECRETIONS

We have people who check the people who check the people who check your *art strike*

(Karen Eliot)

Figure 84. Karen Eliot, *We Have People*, Germany. 1990(?) Notice issued by the Institute for Research in Neoism, Köln, W. Germany.

texts, flyers and pamphlets.[2] The idea was pumped by John Berndt in Baltimore and me in London. One of the earliest responses to our propaganda was a pack of "Give Up Art/ Save The Starving" stickers, badges, and balloons from Eire-based Tony Lowes.

The Art Strike virus spread as John, Tony and I energetically promoted the concept. And so, by the end of 1988, the idea had caused something of a stir in mail art and other circles, but we were still lacking an organizational form to implement the strike. At this point, Steve Perkins, Scott MacLeod, Aaron Noble and others, decided to form an Art Strike Action Committee (ASAC) in San Francisco. Fired by the initiative of these activists I formed a UK ASAC with Mark Pawson and James Mannox. Other ASACs soon sprang up in Baltimore, Eire, and Latin America.

January 1989 saw the California ASAC organize an Art Strike Mobilization Week in San Francisco. The UK and East Coast USA ASACs then attempted saturation leafleting of art institutions and artists' housing in London and Baltimore. This tactic worked effectively in Baltimore and led to the formation of an anti-Art Strike group. The larger more confident art community in London wasn't as easily intimidated. Provocative actions, such as leafleting a party to mark the closure of a gallery, led to earnest discussion rather than howls of outrage.

The year continued with propaganda posters made during the San Francisco Art Strike Mobilization Week being exhibited at two community art venues in London and then during the Fifth International Festival of Plagiarism in Glasgow. Lectures and debates were held in various art schools and institutes in both the UK and the US. All this activity caught the attention of the media, and ASAC representatives made appearances on national radio in both Britain and Eire. There was also a brief Art Strike feature on a London TV station. Written coverage of the Art Strike was more extensive, with features and news stories being carried in everything from underground magazines to the New York *Village Voice*.

No Theoretical Summing Up

Since the Art Strike is located in opposition to closure, there can be no theoretical summing up of the issues involved; the time for theorizing the Art Strike will be after it has taken place.[3] Here and now, it is not possible to resolve the contradictions of a group of "militants" - many of whom do not consider themselves to be artists - "striking" against art. For the time being, the Art Strike must be understood simply as a propaganda tactic, as a means of raising the visibility and intensity of the class war within the cultural sphere.

1. For extensive documentation about Art Strike and Neoism read Stewart Home's *The Art Strike Papers and Neoist Manifestos*, Stirling, Scotland: AK Press, 1991.
2. The concepts of art and *Art Strike* are presented in Stewart Home's edition of *Art Strike Handbook*, London: Sabotage Editions, 1990.
3. Stewart Home broke his three years of silence on January 30, 1993 (Art Strike had ended) and before an audience at the Victoria and Albert Museum he read "Assessing the Art Strike 1990–1993." The following appears in his text, which was reprinted in Lloyd Dunn's March 1993, No 38 edition of *Yawn*: "During the summer of 1989, the underground was awash with Art Strike propaganda. By the end of the year, the Art Strike was receiving some mainstream media coverage—in the press, on TV and radio. ...I'd also made a name for myself, and going "on strike" at the beginning of 1990 represented a far greater sacrifice than when I'd first announced this moratorium on cultural production. It was this change in my circumstances that transformed what had initially been a ludic proposal into something more akin to a career move. Few of the fifty or so individuals who'd been most active in propagating the Art Strike took the proposal very seriously -- I was determined to see the project through to its conclusion — and actually struck! I now appear to be the major force behind the Art Strike. Obviously, this obscures the fact that it took the collaboration of numerous other individuals to generate the interest and debate around the 1990 Art Strike that had not only validated a number of my own activities but also rescued Gustav Metzger's 1974 proposal from the complete oblivion which might otherwise have been its fate." (p. 1851)

* * * * * *



Figure 85. Crackerjack Kid, *Art Strike Mantra Audio Mail Art Chants*, U.S.A., 1991. Audio Collage. Mail artists from seven countries sent audio art that was later mixed and recorded by Thomas Dimuzio under the direction of Crackerjack Kid. Participants included: Guy Bleus, Art Monument, Jeff Bell, Allan Clark, Lisa Kucharshi, Benny L., ManWoman, Mogens Otto Nielsen, Michael Leigh, Hazel, Paul Jackson, Johanna Jackson, Barry Pilcher, MIT Mitropolous, Ruud Janssen, Seiei Nishimura, Reed Altemus, San Francisco Art Strike Action Committee, The Blotter, DeSirey Dodge Peace Post, FaGaGaGa, Arturo Fallico, Kevin Godsoe, John Held Jr., Jim Hlavacek, Kelley, Tom Loudin, Sally Mericle, Midnight, Mark Bloch, Peat O'Neill, Harry Pearson, JK Post, Frederico Rodrieguez, Brian Salzberg, Ralf Schulze, Reid Wood, and Bill Whorrall

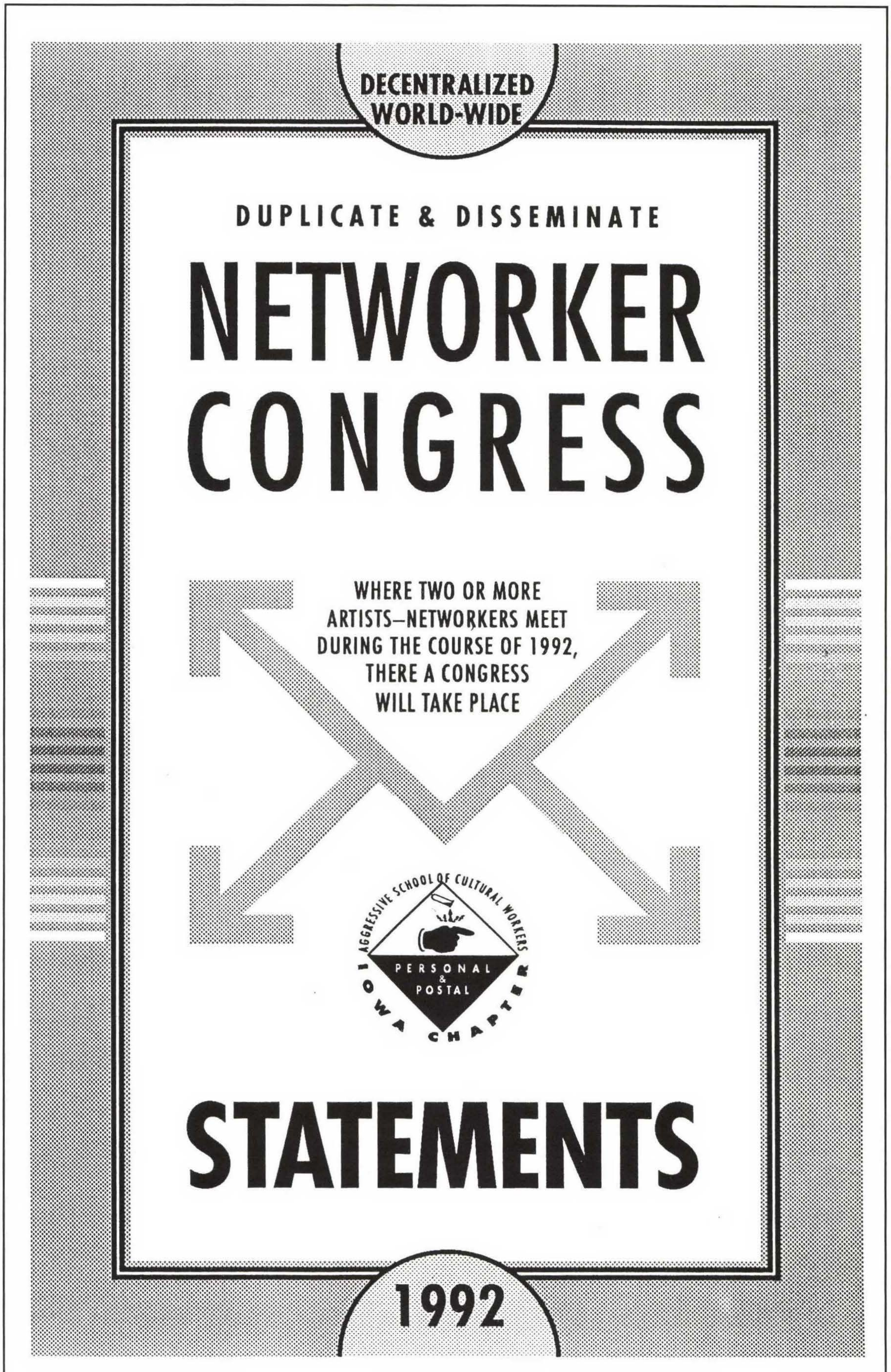


Figure 86. Steve Perkins and Lloyd Dunn, *Networker Congress Statements*, U.S.A., 1992. Aggressive School of Cultural Workers, Iowa Chap[ter (ASCW-IA). Pamphlet that contains approximately sixty statements by mail artists who explore the role of the networker.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 21
MAIL ART: A PROCESS OF DETACHMENT

H.R. Fricker

A mail art show can make sense as a collection of addresses; also, its symbolic meaning as a "world collage" is a nice thing. But does this justify the gigantic waste of creative energy for those thousands of works of art exchanged in the mail art network?

The whole history of modern art from Futurism to Dada to Pop Art was reflected in the photocopies, collages, art stamp sheets, and envelopes now rotting in archives. The works are nearly valueless for the art trade (on purpose?), and no artist can make a living by selling such works. All that one can do is to give them away.

Is there a strategy behind this behavior? Are these gifts in the context of mail art an expression of a new spirituality? Are they an exchange of energy and time? Isn't it characteristic that these works are often not even sent to public exhibitions, but instead, directly to a mail art partner, i.e., they are appreciated in an intimate atmosphere?

Period of Mourning

Are not all these works of mail art testimony to our mourning? Do we grapple with our loss of the traditional role of the artist and with the necessary abandonment of the established artistic production? Must we go through everything again in order to diminish the pain?

The shock of the avant-garde already hit artists with Dada, Duchamp, and Beuys. Nowadays we are aware that we can only escape from being incorporated into the commercialized art world by dropping out! We also know: The largest part of the artistic production of our time, inspired by established market structures, stands in no relationship to the new sensibility of modern man (Fred Forest).

Communication

In our "communication society" the alarming state of our environment demands that committed artists be willing to face new situations. Representing changes and insights with artistic means will not do any more! Firsthand, artists must redefine and remodel their own attitudes. Indeed, this is a very painful process that is nevertheless required if we artists want to achieve our credibility, usefulness and independence in society.

Art Strike

In my opinion, the Art Strike 1990–1993 is part of the process of change and mourning through which artists are jointly trying to assimilate the loss of their traditional role. The strike represents this change as a time for our reflection and learning. It is also a clear sign to the outside art establishment of changing artistic sensibilities and attitudes.

Evidently, the Art Stike slogan to "Give up Art" does not necessarily mean "Give up Communication."

Decentralized Process

What follows this gap created by the Art Strike? Was the international mail art network just a short-lived therapeutic community enabling its members to do the work of mourning?

DECENTRALIZED WORLD-WIDE NETWORKER CONGRESS 1992

Where two or more artists/networkers meet in the course of 1992, there a congress will take place

THE NETWORKER, A NEW ROLE PERCEPTION

New artistic behaviors and strategies have developed world-wide within the last 20 years. Based upon a dialectical and mutual understanding of respective cultures, open relation systems have developed for interchange and co-operation on a communal, regional and international level. The basis of all this is the personal contact.

As foreseen by the DADAists, Futurists, Situationists, Fluxus and others, a new kind of artist has developed - **the networker**.
In total autonomy and independent from the art and culture institutions, the networker is manifested through the international networks of mail art, tourism, copy-art, computer bulletin boards, fax art, cassette labels, bands, and the underground press etc...

NETWORKER CONGRESS 1992

The decentralized world-wide networker congress will serve as a meeting point for all kinds of networkers. The meaning of the common role as networkers should be the focus of the discussion. The congress will also give us the opportunity to spread these ideas through public discussion and media coverage.

ORGANIZATION

You are invited to organize your own congress session according to your needs and possibilities (the decentralized world-wide mail art congress in 1986 consisted of approx. 80 meetings with 500 participants from more than 25 countries). If you plan to organize a congress session in 1992, please inform us immediately giving all the relevant data. We will establish a permanent database of congress activities and we will keep all potential organizers informed, so as to avoid conflicting dates. We know from experience that networkers love to join more than one session!

CONGRESS PREPARATION - NETWORKER STATEMENTS

As a basis for congress discussions, we would like to publish a working paper. We would be grateful to anyone sending a personal statement (one page) concerning their perception of their role as networkers.

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30, 1991

All participants will receive the working paper and the calendar of the various congress sessions by the end of 1991.

SEND NETWORKER STATEMENTS TO EITHER ADDRESS:
- H.R. Fricker, Buro fur kunstlerische Umtriebe, CH 9043 Trogen, Switzerland
- Stephen Perkins, 221 West Benton St. Iowa City, IA 52246, USA

CONGRESS INFORMATION & COORDINATION TO:
- Peter Kaufman, Bergwisenstrasse 11, CH-8123, Ebmatingen, Switzerland

Latin-America : -Clemente Padin, C.C. Central 1211, Montevideo, Uruguay

USA CONGRESS NETLINKS: Five US mail art networkers are serving as facilitators and information links to anyone desiring information about organizing Decentralized, World-Wide Networker Congresses in the US. Write to:

Netlink Dallas: John Held Jr., 7919 Goforth, Dallas, TX 75238
Netlink Hanover: Crackerjack Kid, PO 978, Hanover, NH 03755
Netlink Youngstown: Mark Corroto, PO 1382, Youngstown, OH 44501
Netlink Iowa City: Subspace, 221 W. Benton St., Iowa City, IA 52246
Netlink Oakdale: Lloyd Dunn, PO 162, Oakdale, IA 52319

NETWORKER DATABANK CONGRESS

In collaboration with H.R. Fricker and the University of Iowa's "Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Archive," Crackerjack Kid has proposed and established a **Networker Databank Congress** that will function as a repository for any congress documentation created during 1992. It will also make networker congress information available internationally for interaction through a mainframe on Internet. To participate in this databank congress all networkers who decide to organize or participate in the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress are invited to submit documentary material, congress invitations, proposals, networking statements, audio\visual cassettes, photographs, graphics and zines for compilation in a database and collection that will be made available through the "Crackerjack Kid Eternal Network Archive" and "Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Archive" at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa. Send all networker congress documentation, statements and proposals to:

Crackerjack Kid, Networking Databank Congress, PO Box 978, Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

The Decentralized International Mail Art Congress, initiated in 1986 by Günther Ruch and myself, turned out to be the cradle of the new artist: the *networker*. More than eighty networkers had organized their own congress sessions, and over 500 like-minded visitors had attended the events, which were planned according to the respective necessities and possibilities. The participants all shared the intention to conceive communication and organization systems as well as the willingness to participate in the projects of others.

It was the network of the Eighties that particularly helped form a sheltered setting for processes that were liberating and developmental. Networking strategies were established whereby independent networkers could cooperate with like-minded artists.

New Areas of Activity

The networker does not move in the traditional art spaces of galleries and museums. The networking *field* signifies spaces between people. Mail art and "Tourism," for example, create spaces between partners. Every networker constitutes a measuring-point for the *space system* of another. The networker does not merely construct these spaces by means of computer connections, but defines them, exploits them and establishes relationships within these space-systems.

Defining the Networker's Role

I propose that we channel creative time and energy, which Art Strike has released, to prepare for a First World-Wide Decentralized Networker Congress 1992. Within this structure we can begin collaborating with the new generation of artists working outside the mail art network. Who will organize a Networker Congress Session in 1992? When do we meet for our first preparatory session?[1]

* * * * * *

1. Written on the 72nd day of the Art Strike 1990–1993 in Trogen, Switzerland. Text translated by Simone Louis and Chuck Welch.

Figure 87 (facing page). H.R. Fricker and Peter W. Kaufmann, *Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992*, Switzerland, 1991. Congress coordinators Fricker and Kaufmann developed the Networker Congress broadside between April and June 1991 while in regular contact with North American mail artists John Held, Crackerjack Kid, Mark Corroto, Steve Perkins, and Lloyd Dunn.

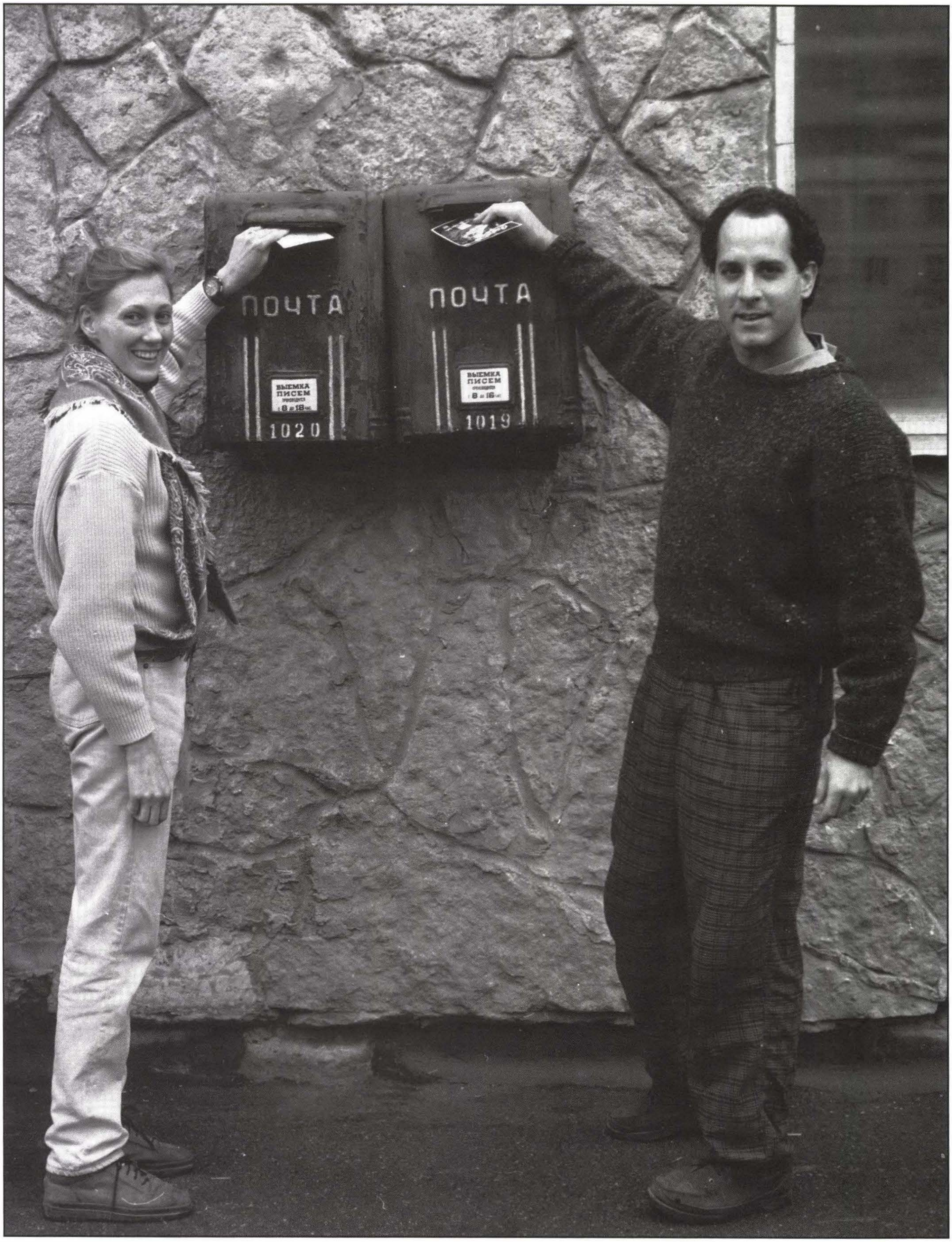


Figure 88. Melinda Otto and Mark Corroto near the Post Office on Bolshevicoa Avenue, St. Petersburg, Russia. 1991. Photograph courtesy of Eugene Shashkin, St. Petersburg, Russia.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 22

MAIL ART TOURISM: A BED & BREAKFAST GUIDE TO EUROPE

Mark Corroto and Melinda Otto

Travel: what's the point? To see another country, try the cuisine, walk the streets, smell the air, speak the language? You can book a tour through your travel agent and see a foreign land in the comfort of an air-conditioned bus...or, if your are a mail artist, you can announce to your friends in the Network that you're coming to their continent and watch the phenomenon of mail art Tourism materialize in your mailbox.

Hans Ruedi Fricker coined the term "Tourism" in the 1980s. He believed that the next step mail artists must take is to actually meet face to face. Fricker said, "After Dadaism, Fluxism, Mailism, comes Tourism."[1] Fricker's theory is that the interaction mail artists enjoy through the mail will be enriched, tested, and eventually rise to a higher level through these meetings. After all, as Fricker explained to us, "Networking in the mail art sense is about the synergistic effect of my mind and your mind,"[2] creating the new "ism" of Tourism. The ultimate realization of Tourism, according to Fricker, is the ability of "communication, where I watch your gestures, eyes, and can respond immediately, even though in some cases we do not share a common language."[3] Fricker's advice to the Network is "Sell your archives—Make Tourism."[4] Tourism is the physical manifestation of the concept of Networking between artists.

Our correspondence flowed at the usual pace, but the ongoing dialogues of politics, art, philosophy, and life were interrupted by inquiries of "When are you coming?" or "Do you need a place to stay?" Contacts that have evolved from a name on an envelope to a complex, interpostal relationship opened their hearts and their homes to us. Upon our arrival, the discussions of politics, art, philosophy and life continued, but instead of in the mailbox, mail art Tourism manifests itself in the kitchens, living rooms, studios, and various other rooms where life and art happen.

The following are journal excerpts from the intrepid travels of Mark Corroto, a.k.a. FaGaGaGa, and Melinda Otto.

Friday, September 14, 1991

Our first morning in Ilford, England, a London suburb of streets lined with acutely manicured row houses, we were awakened by the squawks and squeals of a tenor saxophone. Barry Edgar Pilcher, (Fig. 89) poet, bebopper, Buddhist and Vegan, was practicing, as he does every morning, in his Long Room recording studio. Barry's tall stature and long hair defied all our previous notions of what Englishmen should look like. We found, however, that Barry and Eve, his wife, live a rather non-traditional life with their daughter, Alice Rainbow, and dog, Judy Joy. The Pilchers gave us an alternative taste of English fare. As Vegans we would snack on apples, nuts, and drink soy milk in our coffee.

A supporter of the 1990–1993 Plagiarist Art Strike,[5] Barry explains that from 1990 to 1993 he will not create art instead, he will create Art Strike art. And create we did! In Barry's Long Room we made a recording of improvisational poetry and music utilizing sampling, handmade instruments, and found text. Later, the recording was broadcast on Swedish radio. At the end of our visit a "mail art van," which was used to transport Shozo Shimamoto and other



Figure 89. Visiting the Pilchers: (Left to Right) Eve Pilcher, Barry Pilcher, unknown visitor, Alice Rainbow Pilcher, Mark Corroto and Melinda Otto. Photograph by Melinda Otto.

Japanese mail artists around England and Europe,[6] arrived to take us to the train station. We painted on the mail art van that was covered with art from all the mail artists who came across its path.

Thursday, September 20, 1991

When it rains in Ireland, it really *rains*. Rain storms blow up at a moment's notice, drench Dublin streets, and then disappear as quickly as they came only to make way for another one in Mother Nature's uncompromising cycle. It was comforting to have Eammon Robbins, illustrator and creator of *Mail Art Portraits*, meet us when we arrived. Eammon gave us a choice between a two-hour walking tour of James Joyce's Dublin or a ten-minute tour in his automobile. Since it was raining and dark we chose the auto tour. The greatest treat, however, was climbing four or five flights of stairs to see Eammon's studio. *Mail Art Portraits*, Eammon's irregularly published assemblage of the mail he receives, comes to life on his studio walls in the form of paintings, drawings and mail art. Afterwards, we took off the chill of the Dublin night in a nearby pub and talked about the idiosyncrasies of Irish life, politics and religion.

Friday, September 28, 1991

We blew completely past the Normandy region of France to Lille, where we telephoned Jose VdBroucke. His friendly, encouraging voice told us what train to take to nearby Kortrijk, Belgium and within an hour he was greeting us at the station. Jose's "Temple" is located in the small community of Deerlijk, a short drive from Kortrijk. For the next five days we found ourselves engulfed in the life and philosophies of a self-proclaimed working class hero.

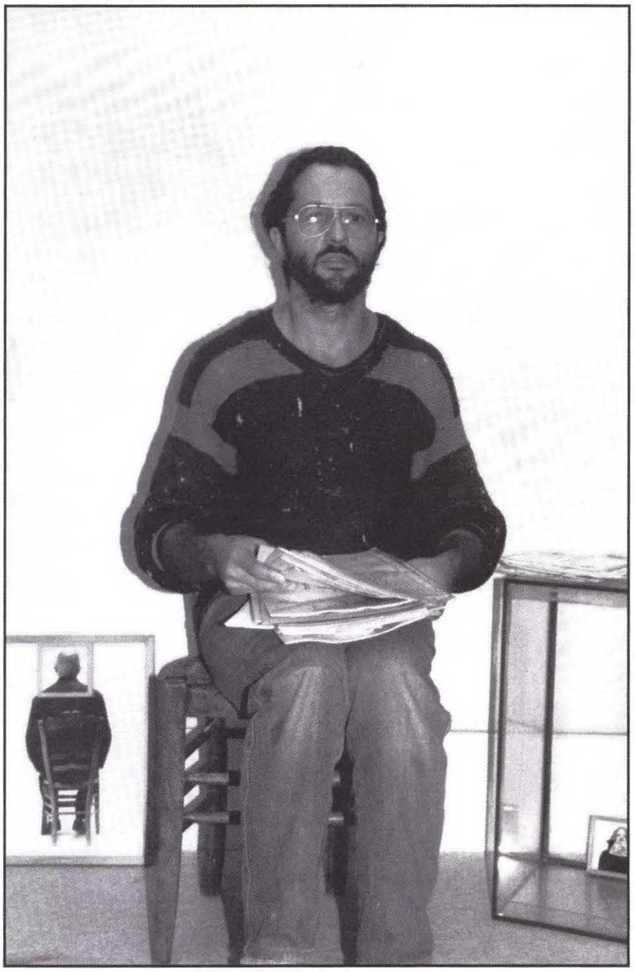


Figure 90. JoseVdBroucke in his Mail Art Temple performing *Talking with Ray Johnson*, Deerlijk, Belgium. Photo by Melinda Otto.

To know Jose is to know his "Temple." Jose explained that his Temple is the physical and spiritual manifestation of his mail art (Fig. 90). At times, the temple comprises his home and studio; other times the Temple is packed into an old tattered briefcase, which he carries to the photocopy shop. Jose, who for years has sent a photo of an empty wooden chair to the mail artists in his network of friends, celebrates the arrival of his Temple guests with a photo session in this chair. As we looked at photos of recent visitors, Shozo Shimamoto, Ryosuke Cohen[7] and Mayumi Handa, posing for the camera in Jose's chair, Belgian mail artists, Luce Fierens and Kristof D'Haeseleer[8] arrived for their turns in the chair. Later that day, we had a feast with Jose's family, Luce, and Kristof in the Temple discussing recent mail art happenings and the future of mail art and Tourism.

Despite the fact that Deerlijk is thousands of miles from New York and many hours from Paris or London, the new thoughts and creativity for the Nineties are coming from this small town in Belgium. The parting image of our host was unforgettable: Jose sitting in a chair facing the empty wooden chair in a performance art piece he calls *Talking with Ray Johnson*.

Thursday, October 11, 1991

During the six-hour train ride from Helsinki to St. Petersburg we had time to wonder and discuss what our trip to Russia would be like. Approximately two years ago we were contacted by Oleg Yudin of the art group called The Raft. He had seen some of our mail art in Rea Nikonova and Serge Segay's mail art exhibition, Scarecrow.[9] Oleg wrote to us asking for information about our "art movement" *movement*! We had never thought of mail art as that. In subsequent correspondence we exchanged mail art and photographs and discussed the concepts of mail art. Oleg and The Raft were attracted by mail art because it was not associated with any political party, nor was mail art required to be registered or approved by any government. The openness and freedom that we took for granted was a new way to exchange art and ideas for Oleg and other Raft members.

But just how free and open were conditions here? As our train stopped at the Russian border and the young Soviet traveller we were seated with was strip-searched, we wondered what the customs officials would think about our bags that contained rubber stamps, postcards, artists' books, and artist stamps. To make matters worse, we had not heard



Figure 91. Members of The Raft with Mark Corroto and Mel Otto at the airport in St. Petersburg, Russia. From left to right are; Ilya Smirnoff, Mark Corroto, Eugene Ermanjuk, Melinda Otto, Helen Veshev, Paul Veshev, and Igor Veshev. Photograph courtesy of Eugene Shashkin, St. Petersburg, Russia.

from Oleg, nor had we received confirmation that he received our letters. The Soviet mails are slow and the return receipt for a registered letter sent in July had not arrived before we left our home in early September. As luck would have it, the customs officials were too preoccupied with the Soviet in our compartment and their discovery of his rugs and vodka to pay attention to our bags.

We arrived in St. Petersburg, a city of over 4.5 million, and found ourselves alone on the train platform. No Oleg, no Raft! All the train and street signs, written in the Cyrillic alphabet, made us feel dyslexic. We were approached by a man who said "Taxi—ten dollars" (not rubles, *dollars*!). We convinced him to drive us to our hotel for five dollars; this, we found later, was a small fortune. The ride to our hotel was much like a taxi ride in New York City: excessive speed as the cabby ignored traffic signs and signals. The trip was unlike New York, however, because there were few lights burning in windows and the streets were practically empty.

We arrived at our hotel, but still no Oleg; and no one in the hotel spoke English. After waiting in the lobby for about an hour with twenty men in trench coats who looked like out-of-work extras from a Humphrey Bogart movie, we were finally

given a room. We locked the door, closed the curtains and decided to cancel any plans to wander the streets until daylight.

Then the phone rang. A voice in broken English said, "Greetings Mark and Mel! Please to meet you...I am friend, I am Eugene Shaskin." Eugene was a photographer from The Raft. (Fig. 91) We arranged to meet Eugene, Oleg, and The Raft the next morning. From 11:00 a.m. the next day until our tearful departure, in which the Russian mail artists pasted paper hearts to our train window, we were surrounded by a group of gracious, loving, free-speaking, free-spirited, young St. Petersburg artists. Our hosts took us to the Hermitage Museum, a performance of Swan Lake, and to see an unofficial art show. As we walked the streets of St. Petersburg we saw the long lines in stores, reminiscent of the American Great Depression. Shortages of goods were everywhere. Our hosts chased the black marketeers, prevalent on every corner, away from us as they tried to sell us everything from fur hats to Gorbie dolls. Every afternoon and evening we were ushered into one of The Raft member's apartments in St. Petersburg for a meal and discussion of politics, art, world peace, and culture. It was obvious that the best and most treasured vodka, scarce meat, and sweets were saved for months awaiting our arrival. The members of The Raft gave us a gift each time they greeted us and again as we said good-night. We, who were travelling for three months in Europe by backpack, had little to give in return. In our embarrassment, we presented cigarettes, T-shirts, a pocket calculator and any loose item in our suitcase.

As with every mail artist we met, the Russians were what Jose VdBroucke described as "gentlepersons;" but unlike the mail artists we met, they were new to mail art and they had a childlike wonderment for the openness and playfulness of it. It was a pleasure and we took great pride in revealing the international realm that mail art encompasses. We discovered that these young Russians share the same hope, desire and fear that we do. We assured them that there are thousands of mail artists like ourselves who are licking stamps and networking around the globe.

Monday, October 15, 1991

We sat in the Wedding Room of the Copenhagen Town Hall waiting to be married. There was no special reason for choosing Copenhagen except that Denmark had the least restrictions for marriage compared to other places we visited. We were accompanied by five other couples. Our idea seemed to have a Las Vegas quality, but there was no pre-recorded wedding march, the building was two or three centuries older than any building in Las Vegas, and Elvis Presley's ghost was nowhere in sight. A woman judge entered the room, we stood, and she started speaking in Danish. She spoke for several minutes and when she stopped we looked at each other and wondered if we were married. As she led the first couple into a smaller, adjoining room we concluded that we were not yet married and waited our turn. Afterwards we took photographs of an oriental couple, who in return took photos of us.

Although we were alone at the ceremony itself, we re-lived and celebrated it with mail artists throughout the entire trip. A special toast was made in our honor in Russia. H.R. Fricker renamed his guest room "The Mel and Mark Suite" and Jose VdBroucke retold the memories of his wedding day. Vittore Baroni, Daniel Daligand, and each mail artist we encountered prepared dinners in our honor and gave us their best wishes and each time we retold them of that Monday in Copenhagen.

Monday, November 12, 1991

If you travel to Hans Ruedi Fricker's Swiss home, a one-hundred-year old converted schoolhouse, you must take a train to Zurich, switch to the St. Gallen train, ride an

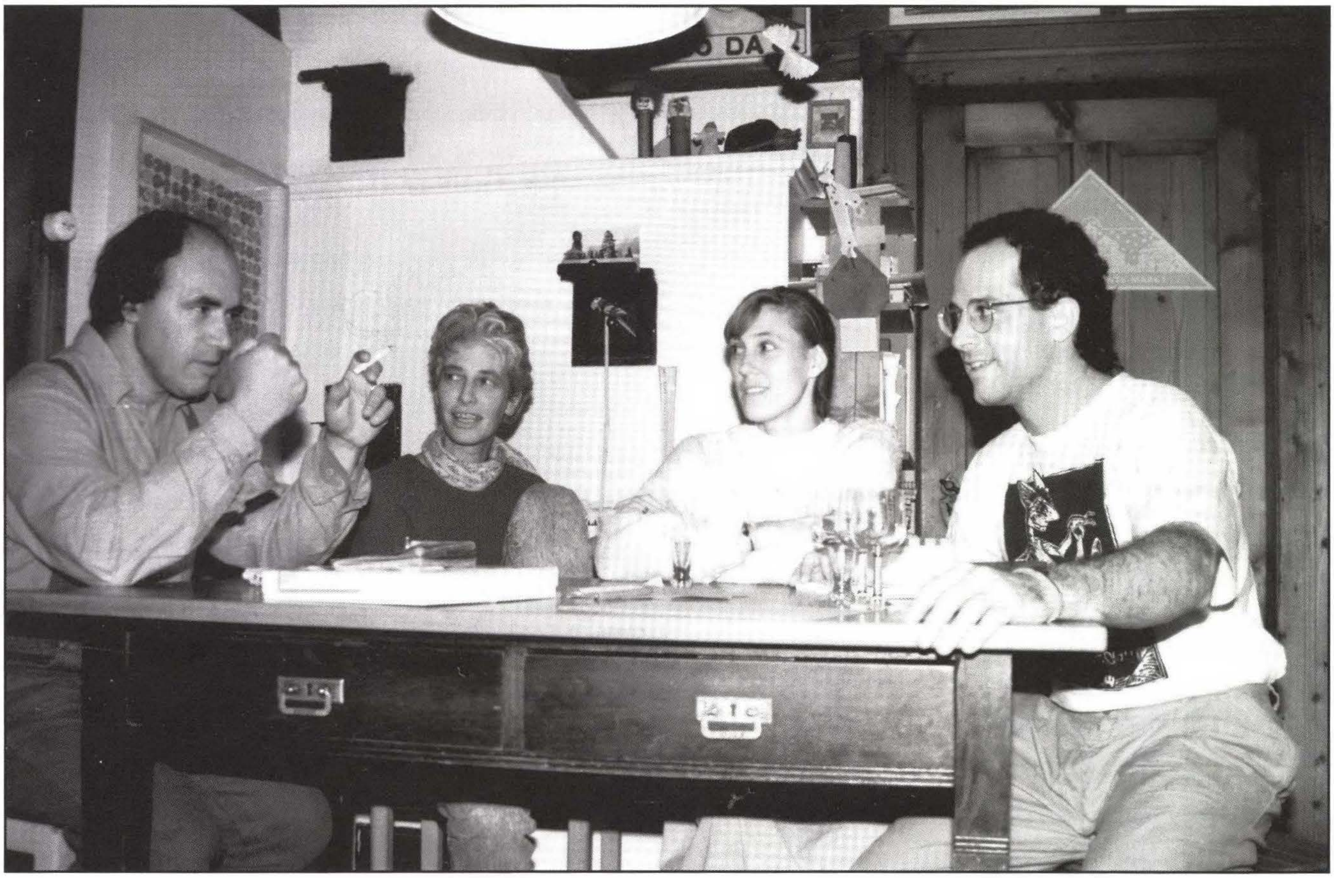


Figure 92. Guests at Hotel Fricker. Melinda Otto and Mark Corroto with Swiss mail artist H.R. Fricker (far left) and his wife Vreni. Photograph by Melinda Otto.

hour to St. Gallen, catch a tram that winds up the rolling mountains from St. Gallen to Trogen, and hike forty minutes around a deep valley (Fig. 92). Fricker was once described as mail art's most aggressive artist. He loves to debate and discuss, not only networking, but nuclear energy, gun control and feminism. As creator of networking "isms"[10] and slogans, Fricker doesn't take his chosen Tourism path lightly. Mail art "Tourists" are treated as special "guests," served from Mail Art Menus, and lodged in suites named after mail artists who have previously visited. Most discussions take place around the kitchen table, but often the conversation travels outside into beautiful hillsides and forests surrounding their home. Fricker and his wife, Vreni, balance life and art with shared responsibilities for raising their three daughters.

Wednesday, November 21, 1991

The physical experience of networking is represented in the activities that radiate around Ruggero Maggi. This Italian mail artist is the lace that ties up the boot of Italy. From the moment we arrived at his apartment in Milan, we experienced the family and network of Italian mail artists he so dearly loves. Inside were Mr. and Mrs. Giovanni Strada of Ravenna discussing mail art over an incredible Italian meal. As the afternoon passed, Ruggero telephoned other mail artists who were eager to meet us.

Ruggero is the founder of the Milan Art Center, a gallery and working space for alternative arts. There, he regularly holds mail art shows and teaches young artists about the network. Later in the week, we travelled to

Florence with Ruggero to attend La Posta in Gioco,[11] a mail art exhibition at the Gallery of the Uffizi. Professor Gianni Broi held an opening reception for many mail artists and guests. Ruggero Maggi introduced us to the faces behind such familiar mail art network names as Ennio Paluzzi, Santini Franco, and Vittore Baroni. It seemed that the entire population of Italian mail artists were present this night. After creating and posting mail art with the Italians at a post office branch set up especially for the Uffizi exhibition, we dined at a nearby restaurant. Ruggero arranged our overnight stay in the studio of Piero Viti, a well-known Florentine artist.

An invitation from Vittore Baroni[12] brought us to the town of Via Reggio where Baroni and his wife escorted us around this small, seaside resort. But we were more interested in the extensive collection in the loft of Baroni's three-story villa. Downstairs in a long, wide hallway, Baroni keeps a gallery of his own and exhibits a different mail artist's work every month. Later, we returned to Milan to the familiar voice of Ruggero Maggi greeting us, "*Ciao*, Mark and Mel"!

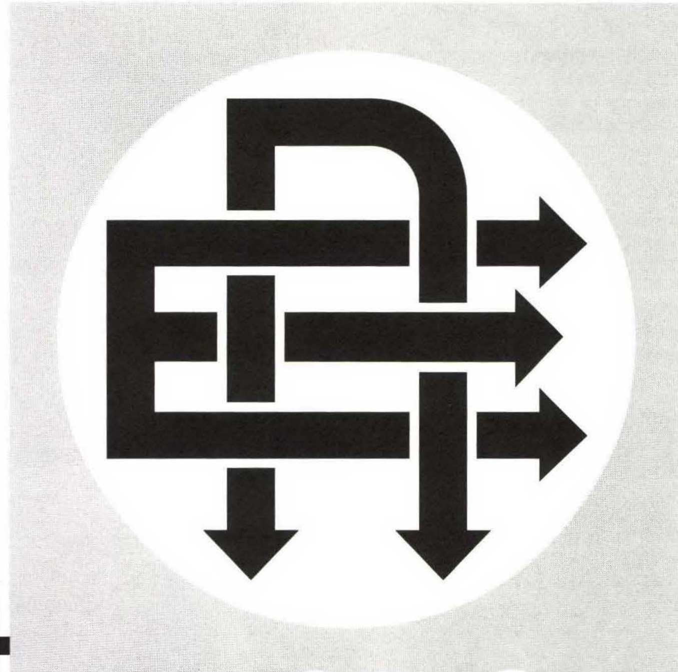
In the end, we returned home with more photos of people than of places, more names written in our address book, and more invitations to return. Our travels took us from the U.K. to Scandinavia, Russia, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain: in total, sixteen countries. Mail Art Tourism, which started as a proposition of H.R. Fricker, was tested and proved successful in our three months abroad. We returned home to find 289 pieces of mail art that accumulated in our mail box and 130 pieces of junk mail. Each correspondent is a potential host or guest at our Bed and Breakfast. At least the mail art outnumbered the junk mail.

* * * * * *

1. "After Dadaism, Fluxism, Mailism, comes Tourism." A rubber stamp slogan first published in H.R. Fricker's *Tourism Review*, Volume 1, No.1, p. 5.
2. H.R. Fricker, interview with author, Trogen, Switzerland, 12 November 1990.
3. Ibid.
4. "Sell your archives—Make Tourism." A rubber stamp slogan appearing in H.R. Fricker's *Mail Art Is Not Fine Art It's the Artist Who Is Fine*, Cremlingen: Switzerland, 1987: 82.
5. The Plagiarist Art Strike, as defined in the *Art Strike Handbook*, proposes that all cultural workers put down their tools and cease to make, distribute, sell, exhibit, or discuss their work from 1 January 1990 to 1 January 1993.
6. Shozo Shimamoto, Ryosuke Cohen, and Mayumi Handa travelled throughout Europe with American Indian, Dennis Banks, in the *Netrun*, a run for peace. (For additional information about this extensive peace project see Chapter 19, "Three Overtures to Networking" by Shozo Shimamoto and Chapter 14, "New Directions: Into the Nineties" by John Held.
7. Ryosuke Cohen regularly publishes *Braincell*, a collection of mailed slogans and rubber stamped images collaged and returned periodically as silkscreened posters.
8. Mr. Luce Fierens publishes *Postfluxbooklets* using his own works and those of mail artists he is in correspondence with. Kristof D'Haeseleer edits *The Wall*, a similar small edition artist zine featuring work by network friends.
9. Scarecrow was a mail art exhibition organized by Rea Nikonova in Esyk, U.S.S.R. in 1989. For more information see Chapter 13, "Mail Art in the U.S.S.R."
10. H.R. Fricker and networking friends are the subject of his book, *"I Am A Networker (Sometimes)*. See Bibliography.
11. La Posta in Gioco, organized by Professor Gianni Broi, was exhibited in the Uffizi, Florence, Italy, 15–28 November 1990.
12. Vittore Baroni is the editor of a mail art zine, *Arte Postale!*, and a mail art book of the same title.

Interconnection
The circle must be practiced
to be experienced. EachOne has a/turn
can voice it/all to all,
pass a feather a stamp a tick,
sayHave your piece.

Coco Gordon



PART 4
INTERCONNECTION OF WORLDS

Interconnection is the interaction of local artists in the international theatre of network activity. Directing, controlling or acquiring this communal play is transcended through active involvement, for interconnection isn't acquired, it is experienced. Networker artists in this section describe alternative and collaborative projects that create, expand and encourage interconnection in global networking.

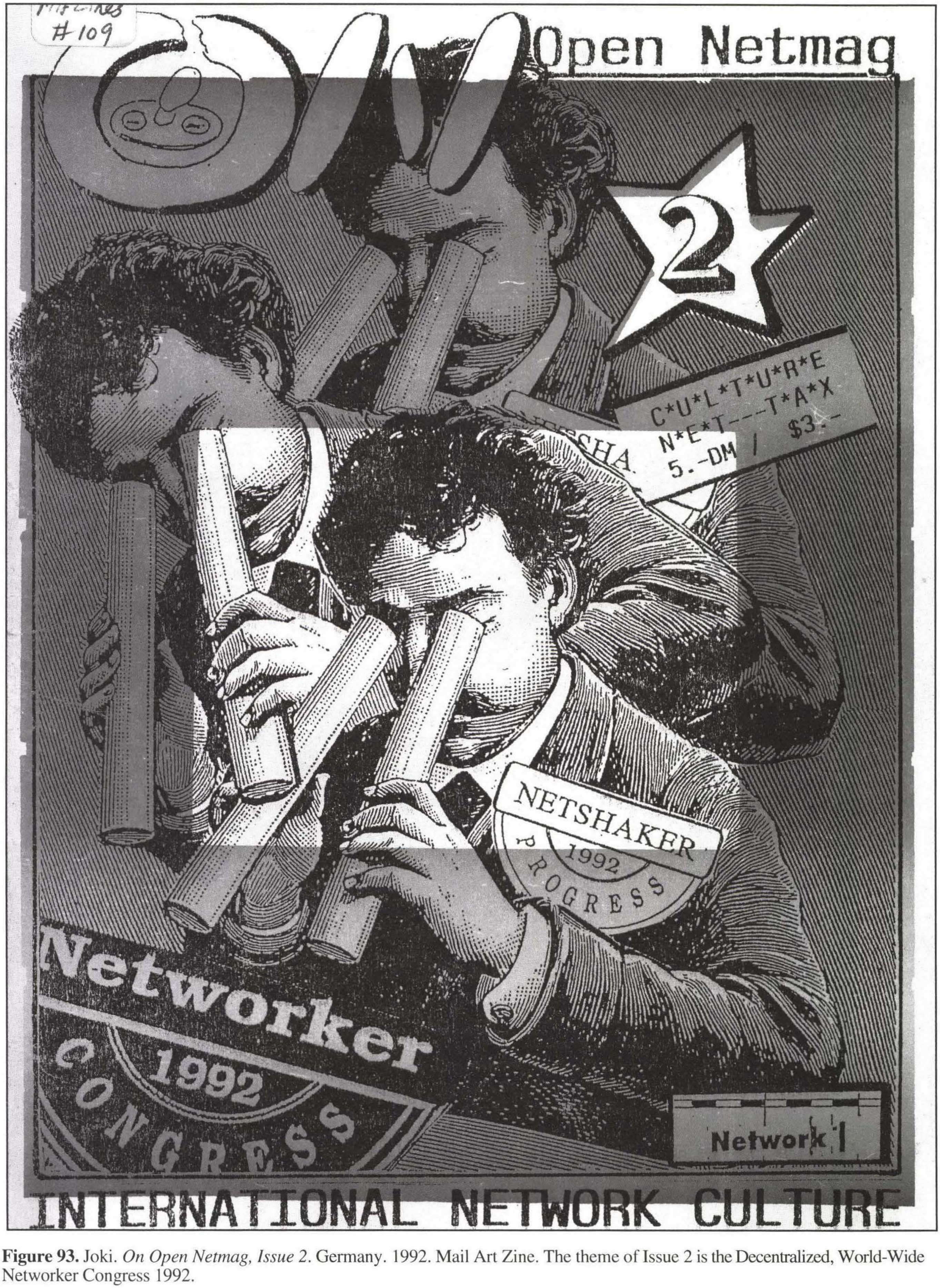


Figure 93. Joki. *On Open Netmag, Issue 2*. Germany. 1992. Mail Art Zine. The theme of Issue 2 is the Decentralized, World-Wide Networker Congress 1992.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 23

THE HIDDEN LINK: A NETWORKING FABLE

Vittore Baroni

"Look into a telescope
to see what I can see:
baffled by the sight
of constellations watching me."
– Luna Wilson, The Network

I mail out and receive many letters every day, and this has been going on since 1977, when I first discovered the existence of the mail art network. Ten years, 3,650 days, 20,000 or more pieces of mail received—and about as many sent out—and I never even invited my mailman in for a drink. Am I some kind of perverted blackmailer to waste such a vast portion of my hard-earned income in postage stamps? I will try to explain the reasons for this extensive process of tele-communications, to you as well as to myself: I am too broke to afford a psychoanalyst.

The world is full of dull, robotic and passive human beings who work dumbly to serve a higher power of materialist or ideological nature to obtain the crumbs of an unreachable cake. We are all a bit robotic at times. The world is also full of very nice and interesting people, scattered in the most unthinkable places, emanating strange currents of energy that attract and inspire other like-minded spirits. Since I was a kid, I perceived the traces of such arcane currents in magazines, books, records, faces and places. We all notice this energy at times, but it may be so subtle and feeble that no sophisticated instrument except the human heart can detect it.

A letter personally addressed to you from the farthest corner of the globe is a much warmer thread of energy than a show on prime-time TV. Through the postal system you can uncover a planetary web of energy, a network of love, art and madness. Everything is possible, anything goes. It is partly like fishing at random in a swimming pool full of oddities. Others write essays that explain with logic and good sense this thing called mail art. I am just trying to find the real motivation for my becoming a mail addict. Be patient—it takes time to peel the onion, layer after layer.

Mail art is out there (since Ray Johnson or since the Pony Express) and it is like an invisible entity that some think they can use to get into art history, others to make the tour of the world in eighty postcards, others to break their isolation, or to fulfill their own delusions. There is a gentle and ephemeral side to the act of exchanging letters/ postcards, but mail art is not simply "cute" or a lonely hearts club for would-be artists. If you only need a pen-pal, there are many organizations that can help you very efficiently (try, for example, *The Letter Exchange*, P.O. Box 6218, Albany, CA 94706-0218 USA). Mail art borders and crosses into other alternative fields of expression: underground music, literary/poetry magazines, graffiti and street art, street theatre and performance, the whole complex tradition of self-publishing, the surviving and metamorphosed fringes of the old counter-culture, etc. Therefore, the playful and ephemeral side of mail art is always balanced by more serious and lasting implications.

We have become saturated by mass-media communications; the brain short-circuits because there is too much data available at all times. A personally addressed message activates a direct response; it's a totally different mental process from the passive consumption of art works

on a gallery wall. The artist comes down from his ivory tower and becomes once again a functional part of our daily life. Art, like music, was born in prehistoric times out of magic and functional preoccupations. Mail art can be a great learning experience, it is like a toy in the hands of a child; you invent different rules every time you put yourself at play. It is a micro-universe that you can monitor from your living-room, a kaleidoscopic landscape that is different from every point of observation.

I will not try to hide the boring and nefarious aspects of postal networking. Receiving small art items from around the globe sometimes turns into a greedy amassing of materials with no redeeming finality. Collecting may become a form of perversion nurtured by death instincts, like pinning live butterflies on a wood panel. Mail art also tends to become too predictable, organizing itself into new vicious circles (invitation-exhibition-catalogue) that substitute the old one (artwork-dealer-collector-museum). At their worst, mail artists exploit their association with hundreds of cooperative individuals to "create" their own illusory art movement, to push their name or "ism" up on the ladder to fame. You can endure happily the total chaos of clashing different egos and perspectives that coexist in the network (differences of age, color, skill, creed, etc.), or you may end up in bitter arguments, depending on your grade of flexibility and tolerance.

"There is always someone asleep and someone awake, someone dreaming asleep, someone dreaming awake...THE NETWORK IS ETERNAL." This was written by Robert Filliou in the September 1973 issue of *FILE Magazine*, and that's how the beloved definition of "Eternal Network" was born, referring to creative correspondence. Filliou, like Ray Johnson in a more oblique way, is very smart in detecting the characters of the networking philosophy, the mutations it incites in the artists' spirit and role. In the same text he writes: "If it is true that information about and knowledge of all modern art research is more than any one artist could comprehend, then the concept of avant-garde is obsolete. With incomplete knowledge, who can say who is in front, and who isn't?" It is clearly no more a matter of being in front, but of going deeper; of rediscovering the magic and functional values of art, but not with the glamorous and superficial attitude of the art market. Art today, to have a real social meaning, must merge again with science, philosophy, and everyday life. The design of a ball-point pen I buy downtown is more interesting than the latest trendy vernissage.

Mail art is only one among many peep-holes spying on Networkland. I use this widely spread definition (mail art), but personally I prefer to think of an Ethereal Open Network (E.O.N.)[1] that includes all sorts of alternative networks operating today on the planet. Mail art is not enough; it's very reductive and frustrating to limit your playground to a highly specialized ghetto of postcard-makers and rubber stampers. Networking, the search for a contact with other beings and the collective work on different projects, is interesting for me only when it opens the mind to new frontiers, when it does not shy away from Utopia. The 1970s and 1980s may be looked on as two decades that have forgotten all radical dreams of cooperation towards a better quality of life for all. It was an era of materialist dreams and hard competition, each one for himself. Yet these are only the photographs proposed by the media, by the corporations and sociologists, by the programmers of fads. The currents of positive energy always flow, the resistance never stopped, it only changes clothes now and then. The mail art network (Fig. 94) is only a leaf in the big tree of E.O.N. Unfortunately, even the leaves believe that the tree is barren. They can't see the other branches in the deep smog.

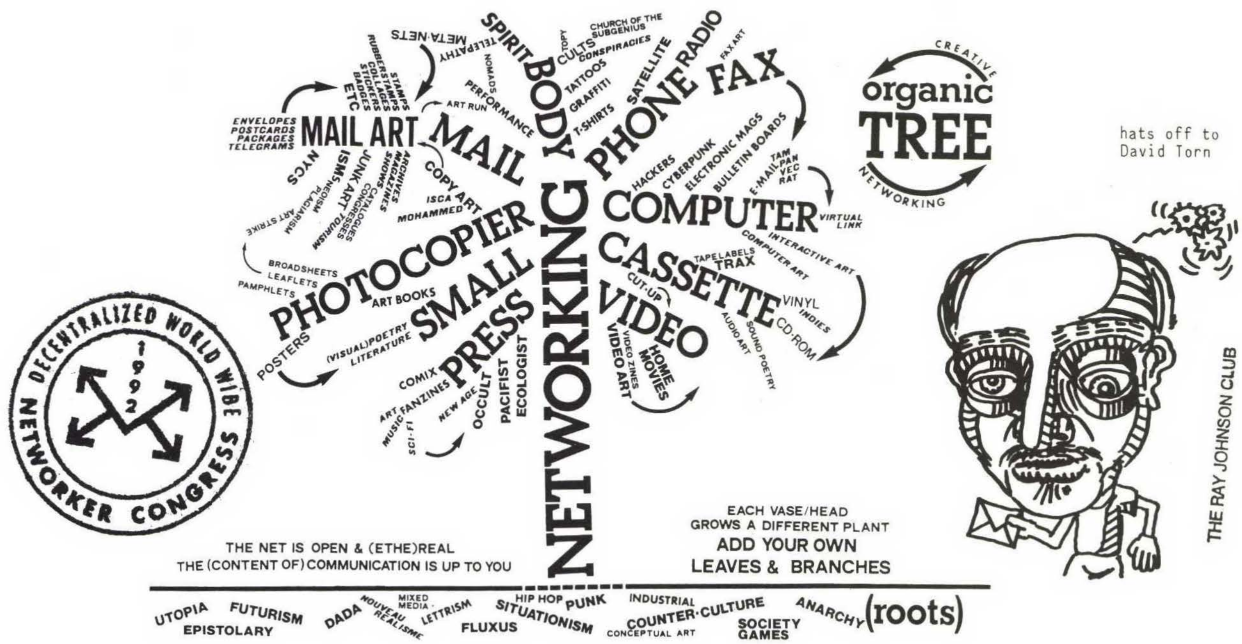


Figure 94. Vittore Baroni, *Networking Tree*, Italy, 1982. Illustration for *Arte Postale! No. 63.*

A media war is on, every day and everywhere, and we are all born into slightly different trenches. This poses some problems in the very terms with which we communicate. I write with my own particular history as a background, and you all read a slightly different story in my words. I am not here to convince or enroll anyone, I am in front of a typewriter feeling helpless. And what about loneliness, unemployment, despair, toothache, you-name-it? Surely, to put the hands to work, to draw or paint or type, may be as useless as staring into the void. Remember how God answered Woody Allen: "You only have to write better jokes." Mail art is as good a starting point as any other, to look for (or laugh for) the "Meaning of Life." How many mail artists are out there? In ten years, I have corresponded with at least 3,000 different people (there is a limit to everybody's spare time!), but the total number of active postal artists has been estimated in the range of 10–20,000 individuals. It's a small army, or a big family, depending upon how you look at it. Sometimes big numbers are smaller than they seem and small numbers are bigger than you think. Today some political parties have fewer than 20,000 members, some national magazines have fewer than 20,000 readers. Very influential novels have been first published in editions of few hundred copies. It takes only a few saboteurs in the right places to stop the Machine. It takes only a good joke to make half the planet smile.

Though the postal system is still the cheapest way to communicate with the various continents, eventually the computer-terminal will replace the mailbox, with postage costs ever-rising and modem/BBS technology expanding constantly. The days of *mailed* art may be already numbered, but something else will substitute for the good old envelope. On January 1, 1994, a mail art cyberspace e-zine entitled *Netshaker On-Line* became Internet's first electronic journal devoted entirely to the discussion of mail art. Contact editor Crackerjack Kid at the e-mail address (Cathryn.L.Welch@dartmouth.edu.). A direct meeting of networkers has been tried in various recent occasions with the result of festivals, congresses and nervous breakdowns, including telepathic experiments and a "Convention" on the astral plane (write to Hakim Bay for more details, c/o *Automedia*, PO Box 568, Brooklyn, New York 11211-0568 USA)

In the past decade there have been a few attempts to make a truly international mail art magazine, but with scarce success. Mostly, mail art publications are simply assemblages of pages submitted by participants; xeroxes, rubber stamp works, collages, etc. Consequently, they have a very limited circulation (100-250 copies). In most cases, these magazines are the effort of a single artist and last as long as he/she can find the time and money to gather and deliver all the copies. Some publications, more or less connected with mail art, were able to support themselves through grants, sales and subscriptions (*VILE*,[2] *Lightworks*,[3]), but usually mail art zines are traded and distributed for free (needless to say, the fact that you do not have to pay to get a piece of mail art is what really makes a difference in respect to the official art market!). What seems to be lacking today is a stable magazine about networking theories and problems, a publication where you can find in-depth essays on particular aspects of the networking process and firsthand functional data to expand (or start from scratch) your personal involvement in the network. No professional critic or art scholar seems prone to do the work (as there are no profits involved!), so the mail artists themselves try to fill the gap. In the 1980s the only two comprehensive studies available about Mail Art and networking were written by former networker Mike Crane (*Correspondence Art*, Contemporary Arts Press, San Francisco, 1984) and active networker Crackerjack Kid, (*Networking Currents*, Sandbar Willow Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1986).

You only learn what mail art is by becoming a mail artist. To make mail art you just have to compress your own ideas into a mailable format and send it to somebody. It's as simple as that. What you will receive in exchange depends very much on what you send out: A bad idea will not stir up exciting replies; a work full of passion will not pass unnoticed. Now you only need a few addresses to start with, then your contacts will grow harmoniously while you plunge more and more into the network. I will give you just some key addresses that will save me from printing pages and pages of names. As I said, mail art magazines appear and disappear overnight, but copies of these three should still be available (usually in exchange for your own stuff, or ask for details): Joe Kaffki, a.k.a. Joki, *S'mail Global Network Zine* (Postbox 2631, D-495, Minden, Germany) and Dobrica Kamperelic's *Open World* (Ustanicka 152/VII-73, 11000, Beograd, (Sumice) Yugoslavia). Also available is my own *Arte Postale!* (Near the Edge Editions, Via C. Battisti 339, 55049, Viareggio, LU, Italy). You can pick up contacts from these publications, add the addresses of your friends, start weaving your own web right now!

Mail art is a very small Freelandia. It is a working alternative to capitalist art and socialist state art. Other little bits of our space-time can be liberated and organized under



Figure 95 Vittore Baroni and Piermario Cianni, *Arte Postale! No. 63.* Italy, 1992. Mail Art Zine. This networker issue includes Piermario Cianni's computerized cover design and a vinyl recording of *Let's Network Together*, complete with ultrarare inverted labels.

new balances, open, happy and egalitarian. What is really imperative at this point is to start crossing between different underground networks, realizing how big and deeply rooted is the networking strategy, employed to fulfill urgent needs and practical common interests A powerful (utopian) scheme of planetary reorganization in a networking perspective is devised in the book *Bolo'Bolo* by P.M., already a classic of the underground and reprinted in many different languages. This book is a valid starting point to understand the far-reaching implications of the networking process, as are old texts by Timothy Leary, Buckminster Fuller, or Robert Anton Wilson. Here are some useful key addresses to verify the existence of different, sometimes overlapping, networks: *Semiotext(e),* issue number 13, provides a

detailed map of underground-unconventional publications and groups in the USA today (552 Philosophy Hall, Columbia University, New York, New York 10027, USA—the English edition of *Bolo'Bolo* is also available here); *Whole Earth Review* (27 Gate Five Road, Sausalito, CA 94965 USA) is already trying to sew together the different aspects of the communication revolution, as did Mike Gunderloy while serving as founding editor of *Factsheet Five*,[4] (PO Box 170099, San Francisco, CA 94117-0099). Gunderloy's magazine, now edited by R. Seth Friedman, is an incredibly comprehensive list of reviews, independent zines, books, records, videos and tapes. *Encyclopaedia Psychedelica* (EPi, PO Box 833, London NW6 England) reshapes the counter-culture of the 1960s in the context of the contemporary computerized world; *Option* (P.O. Box 491034, Los Angeles, California, 90049, USA) is just one among many magazines devoted to alternative and home-made music; *Re/Search* (20 Romolo St., Suite B, San Francisco, California, 94133, USA) delves into bizarre and neglected subjects, giving voice to a very loose movement of media terrorists of the 1980s, referred to as "industrial culture;" *The Church of the SubGenius* (P.O.Box 140306, Dallas, Texas, 75214, USA) and *The Temple of Psychick Youth* (T.O.P.Y., Station 23, P.O. Box 687, Halfway, Sheffield S19 5UX, England) are two different projects that parody, with hilarious or scary language, the world of fanatic religious preachers and esoteric sects, creating a sort of international anti-cult.

If you are into rubber stamps, you can't do without a copy of *Rubberstampmadness* (408 Southwest Monroe, No. 210, Corvallis, OR 97333) or *National Stampagraphic* (1952 Everett St., North Valley Stream, New York, 11580, USA); if you search for rare records you need *Goldmine* (700 E. State St. Iola, Wisconsin, 54990, USA) or *Record Collector* (43/45 St. Mary's Road, Ealing, London W5 5RQ, England, United Kingdom). Specific publications exist for any subject you desire, from horror movies to the occult, from conspiracy theories to pro wrestling.

As you can see from these heterogeneous examples, the purposes of networking range from political activism to pure entertainment, from very general issues of vital importance to highly specialized interests. Likewise, the publications connected with the different networks may be independently produced, Xeroxed in very limited editions, or available in the news stands. You only have to keep your eyes open to discover, in good book shops, several more-or-less alternative publications devoted to ecology, survivalism, health food, unconventional music, etc. What is really important, instead of getting lost in the webs of contacts, is to find the hidden link between so many seemingly unrelated networks. Not everything that springs from the underground is automatically more valid or interesting than the "truth" that is generally agreed upon in official quarters. You have to travel through the networks with your mind open and your critical faculties on alert. But if you do not try this trip, you run the risk of never learning about books, ideas or experiences that may radically change your life. There exists a wealth of information suppressed or concealed from the public view, primarily because it questions the social structure and the balance of powers on which contemporary societies (Left, Center and Right) are built.

If the old saying "the medium is the message"[5] is still valid today, all these different networking experiences show us that a planetary cooperation outside conventional political organizations, national or ideological barriers, is possible and already operating at certain levels. These networks are still numerically limited but are based on incredibly strong ties, as they grew out of real needs and function to fulfill them. Paradoxically, the hidden tree of networks is much

more concrete and efficient today that it was in the 1960s, a period of seminal researches and illuminations that were highly romanticized and polluted by the media. Today, we benefit from the experiences of the past, trying not to repeat the same mistakes. Mail art is not a futile game at all, if you see it in the light of a larger scheme, an open flow of amity, goods, and practical information. Maybe I have not wasted all of my thirteen years spent licking stamps and searching for that thin current of human energy. We are like pirates, looking for the treasure in Networkland. And we all own some gems to share. Join the adventure, and be busy for ever after.

* * * * * *

1. "E.O.N." and "nEONics" are inter-related acronyms used frequently in collaborative correspondence between Crackerjack Kid (the editor of *Eternal Network*) and Vittore Baroni. The term "neonics" is an acronym that describes and defines the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of *networking process art; n*ew, *e*thereal, *o*pen *n*etworkers, *i*nter-connected through *c*ommunication and *s*pirit. Throughout 1987 Vittore Baroni, Volker Hamann, and Crackerjack Kid discussed a mutually shared interpretation of Robert Filliou's "eternal network." The first international networking magazine, *Netzine*, was edited by Baroni, Crackerjack Kid, and Volker Hamann as a strategy to open the "eternal network" beyond an exclusive mail art context. Baroni's new phrase for expressing this open definition of eternal network was the acronym Eternal Open Network, E.O.N. In the introduction to *Netzine*, Crackerjack Kid first used nEONics as a key towards unlocking the mail art "eternal network." "Break apart 'eternal network' and we are left with an 'Eternal Open Network.' Using this nEONics key to open our 'eternal network' offers endless possibilities for discovering many creative networks. *Netzine* is an inclusive, collaborative net-working tool for discovering Ethereal Open Networks."

2. For more information read Chapter 6, *"VILE History."*

3. *Lightworks Magazine*, edited by Charlton Burch, covers new, experimental and alternative art forms. Issue number 20/21, "Actions on the Outskirts: An Issue of Troublesome Art & Bothersome Ideas," includes the following description: "*Lightworks Magazine* has always been a forum for the oddball, the iconoclast, the artist that wants to push it just a bit more. And in that respect this issue is no different from our others." Always a beacon for mail artists and networking activities, *Lightworks Magazine* is available by writing to P.O. Box 1202, Birmingham, Michigan 48012.

4. For more information about artists' zines read Mike Gunderloy's "Access to Zines" in *Whole Earth Review*, Spring 1991, Issue #70, 90–93. Also available from Penquin Books, New York, is Mike Gunderloy's 158-page, fully illustrated *The World of Zines: A Guide to the Independent Magazine Revolution.*

5. Marshal McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.

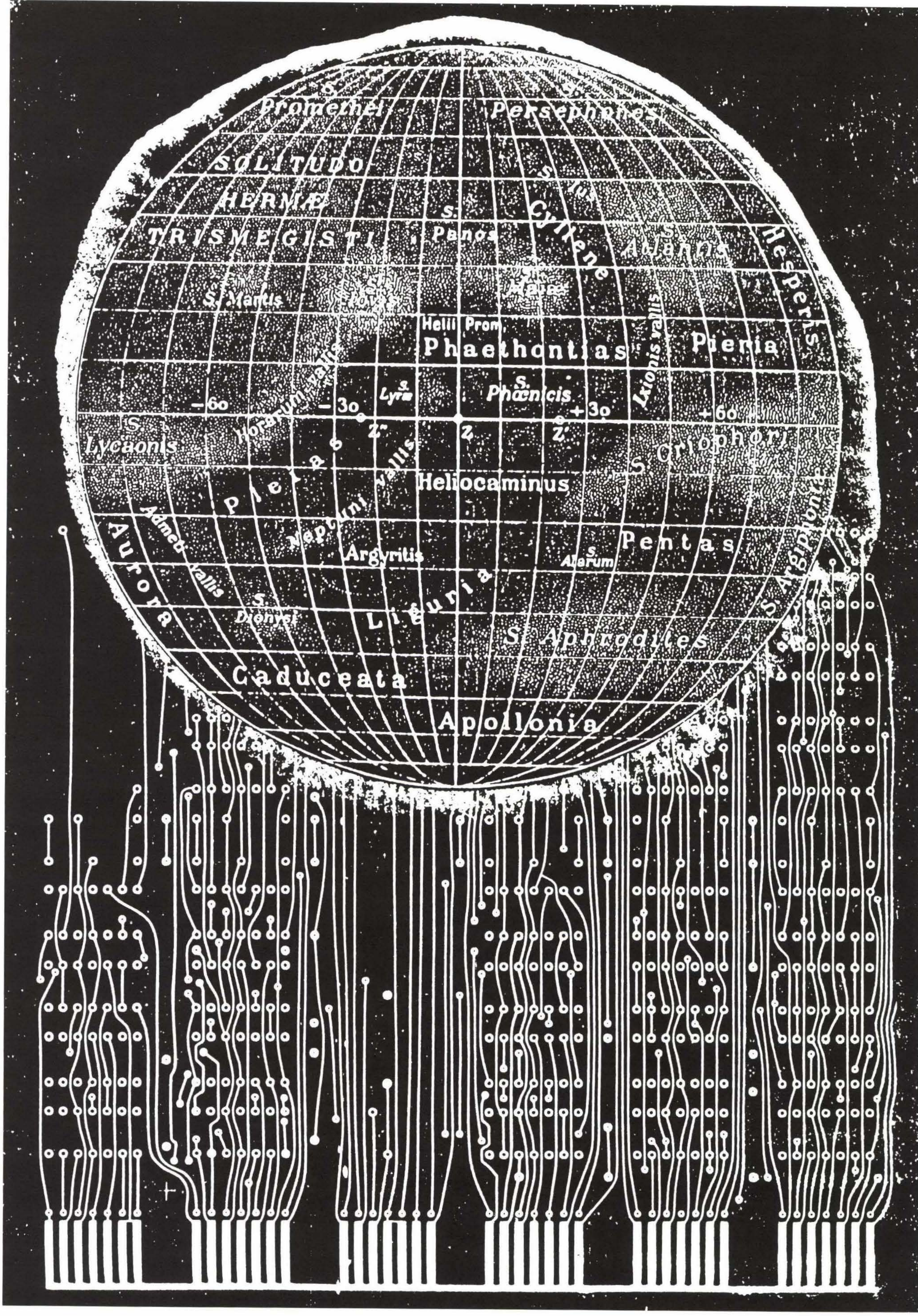


Figure 96. Carol Stetser, *Page from Currents*, U.S.A., 1992, Artists' Book.

CHAPTER 24

INTERCONNECTION

Bern Porter

During my long association with Wilhem Reich he often said to me he was standing up vertically in a three-foot-diameter cylinder seven feet tall looking out at me through small swinging windows, and I was similarly encased peering out at him through my windows across the intervening space.

We were, as he said, "armored"—separated from one another in such a way as to easily induce hatred, misunderstanding, even permanent and deep personal dislike and open war with intense anger. Nations, he said, countries, cultures, areas of the world were equally estranged by such enclosing shields.

As a world-wide practitioner of mail art at the rate of four to six mailings a week, I received today in my mail box on the porch here:

one art/word note from Poland

one art note from Australia

one mail art letter from Germany

Valid and legal proof that three different people from three distinct cultures were in no way armored or separated from me. The four of us were, in actuality, bonded, together in mind, spirit, with a feeling that only engenders human warmth, understanding and rapport.

That I could only surmise their physical appearances and immediate environment did not diminish my feeling that I had known them and they me for many years. That I might or might not ever see them or hear again via another exchange, either one way or both, merely crystallized the mutual warmth of the feeling all the more.

A total space experience, you might say.

Achieved with a stamp, a little paper, a little time!

How trite, you say.

But how major, I reply.

Needed to by all of us.

The governments of Uruguay and Mexico have officially recognized the importance of such interplay of peoples. What other countries, including U.S.A., will now establish such an encompassing endeavor so sorely needed at this time world wide?

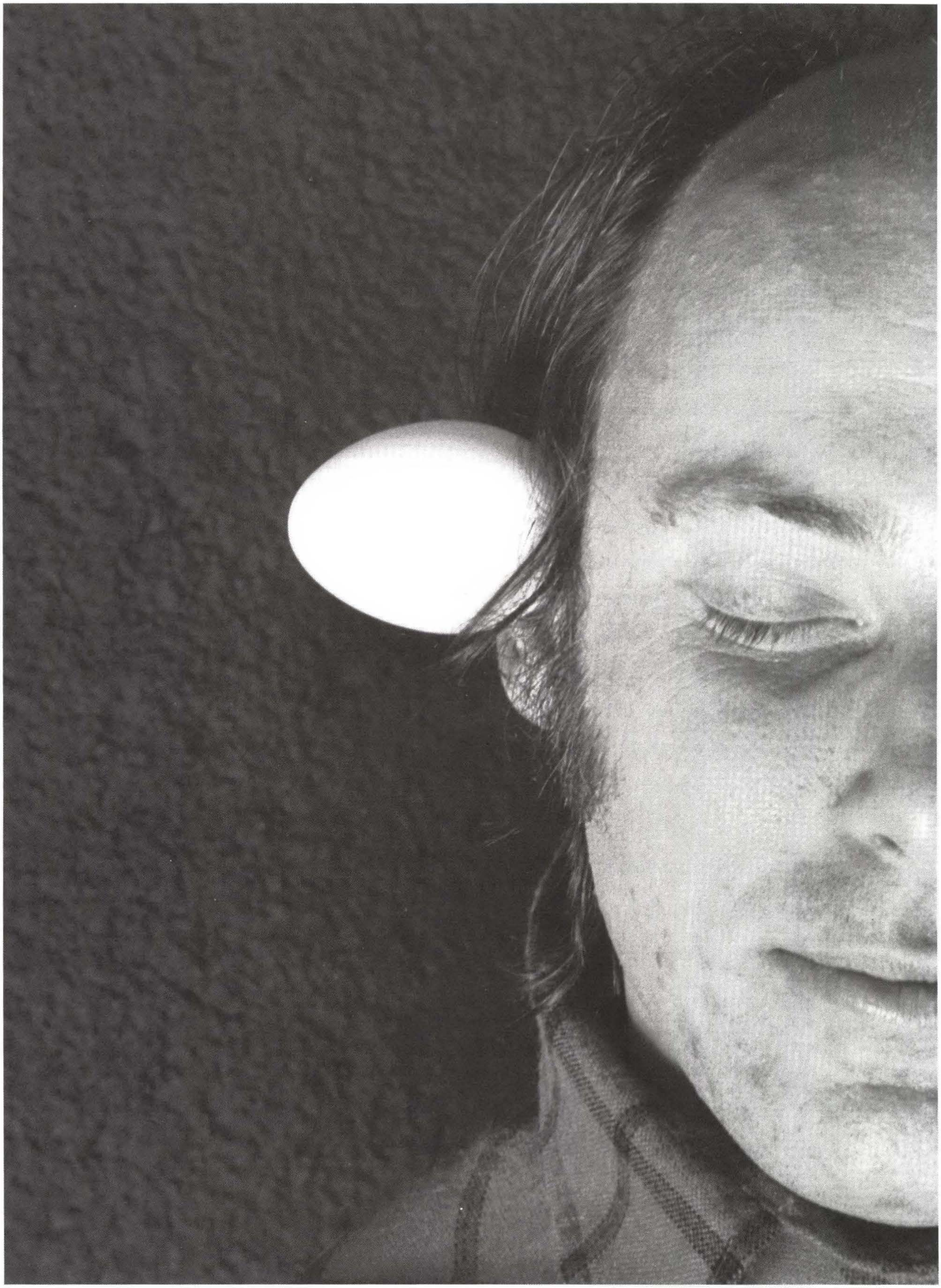


Figure 97. *Portrait of Peter R. Meyer*. Sweden. Photo courtesy of Anders Roth.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 25

MAIL ART IN COMMERCIAL RADIO AND TELEVISION

Peter R. Meyer

"I always try for more notes than I'm sure I can hit."
– Miles Davis

As far as I know, I am one of few people in the world who has made a living out of working with mail art—mainly electronic mail. As a professional radio/TV/film-director I had possibilities in Sweden from 1982–1987 to create a series of programs for the government-owned station, Sveriges Radio. During five years I produced *Nightexercise*, an international multimedia project with TV programs, radio programs, lectures, exhibitions, books/catalogues, records/tapes. My ambition was to inspire colleagues and provoke the ordinary listener/viewer with programs based upon audio-art and video-art created by the mail art network. *Nightexercise* was a very successful project that got a lot of quality awards and was broadcast in thirty countries for twelve million people. Never before had so many people been given the possibility to explore the "new" artform called "mail art."

Mail Art in Radio

Through artists like Rod Summers, Zev and Klaus Groh,[1] I got in contact with the mail art network in 1980. I sent out thousands of letters with invitations to take part in my *Nightexercise* project. The program was an attempt to renew and develop traditional radio. No program was to be alike and so I made use of different narration techniques. *Nightexercise no. 4* was also called *Ectoplasm*, an audiophonic search for truth in hidden roots of the ego," and was, as an example, an attempt to give a shape to the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s by private sound recordings, news, art, music, literature and radioprograms. It was also a demonstration of different ways of using the radio medium as a form of art, as audio. A lucid picture of the compositional structure of "Ectoplasm" was given in the Swedish weekly TV/radio-magazine *Roster i Radio*, and an important concept in the project is described:

> One of the basic concepts in the program is that one's own personal experiences have a large measure of universal applicability. Every fragment of a memory that a person can hold out for perusal has its equivalent in other people... As a listener one listens visually to the blended stream of memories. For example, to listen to Arne Thore'n reporting the assassination of Kennedy is a case of starting up one's own inner projector and letting the disjointed documentary film sequences rinse the white screen... Occasionally, Meyer pushes the whole time perspective aside in order to make way for thoughts and reflections that have criss-crossed his consciousness.[2]

The *Nightexercise* programs were broadcast in Sweden and in thirty other countries to millions of listeners. Over 200 audio artists, including Yoko Ono, Beth Anderson, Morgan Fischer, Terry Fox, Laurie Anderson, and Mitchell Kriegman participated in the project. Mail artists who actively participated in the programs included Rod Summers, Carlo Pittore, Vittore Baroni, Bern Porter, Kristian Jonsson, Mogens Otto Nielsen, Ruedi Schill, Peter Below, Mario Rondi, T.E. Paulsson, Dan Froberg, Daniele Ciullini, Enzo Minarelli, Bruno Talpo, Hank Bull, John Fekner, Randy Magnus, Klaus Groh, Allan Vizents, Andrej Dudek Dürer, Alex Igloo, Dimosthenis Agrafiotis, Mark Melnicove and many others. The participation and

cooperation of countless mail artists helped to transform the programs into a major avant-garde and cult event. *Nightexercise* took radio-listeners by storm. For the first time since the advent of radio, an avant-garde program had more listeners than traditional programs, and mail artists were being heard by people not engaged in art.

Mail Art in Television

Rather quickly, I learned that artists engaged in mail art and audio art often also produced video art. For this reason I was later asked to produce the *TV-Night Exercise*, employing the same stylistic mode as was used for the radio programs.

Every show was a collage of different tapes. They were characterized by two levels of creation: first, the artistic intention of the contributors and, subsequently, those of the production team. Our policy was, therefore, to inform all those taking part about our editing, shortenings and changes to the insert. We also sent our specially designed cassette copies to all contributors abroad.

As I had access to only a half-hour per week of national broadcasting time, I was required to make some controversial decisions. I selected tapes, some of which I also edited. If a tape was too long, for instance, I edited to allow the possibility of representing more artists. I also decided to pay each artist for his/her contribution and also expenses ($200.00 per extract). This is how some of the members of the mail art network also came to be shown on commercial television. In any event, as a result of these activities, the whole movement became well-known, and also attracted many new participants. Among the three hundred video artists, we witnessed appearances by mail artists such as Carsten Schmidt Olsen, Peter Below, Carlo Pittore, Ray Johnson, G.A. Cavellini, Gerald Jupitter Larsen, Ed Higgins III, Anna Banana, Buster Cleveland, Bill Gaglione, John M. Bennett, Arleen Schloss, Guy Bleus, John Held Jr., Turk Le Clair, Anna Arnold, Judith Hoffberg, Vincent Trasov, Randy Magnus, Dutch Knotts, John Fekner, Jaques Lizene, Rod Summers, Pat Oleszko, and many others.

TV-Night Exercise Nos. 11, 12 demonstrate the attractive frame-story that I created for the mass audience. A review in the English magazine *TV World* gives a summary of show no. 11 and a glimpse of show no. 12.

> 'Night Exercise No. 11' is a mixture of tragedy and comedy, irony and innocent jokes—all of them pearls in the necklace of art, where styles and concepts do not give an impression of eclecticism, but a feeling of synthesis. Witnesses, comments, sounds, and pictures help to keep the story within the framework, adding a new philosophical accent to the program.[3]

> "'Night Exercise No. 12'... We see a room filled with Swiss cuckoo-clocks (Raymond Hoepflinger's 'Kunstdefinition') reminding us of the problem of time and feeling of being in a vacuum of well-organized modern society. Shalom Gorewitz's electronically-stylized intercourse in 'Sub-atomic Babies' is climaxed in a spiritual rebirth of our protagonist from a huge white egg, but the reincarnational idyll is immediately disturbed by a woman, breaking the egg on her knee (Schedule 1 through 4' by Randy Magnus)[4]

Night Exercise as Documentation

All the mail art and audio/video tapes that were sent to the project were also presented in the form of a touring exhibition. It was first shown at the Modern Art Museum in Stockholm in 1983. (Fig. 98) Later, it toured to major museums in Malmö, Södertälje, Basel and finally to Franklin Furnace in New York in 1985.

Jenny Dixon at WNYC radio in New York broadcast a radio interview with me, where I, at the end of the program, recommend to her to make new programs about the whole mail art network. Jenny Dixon did, and some of



Figure 98. Opening day, March 12, 1983 at Peter R. Meyer's *Audio Exhibition*, Moderna Museét, Stockholm. Photograph courtesy of Anders Roth.

those interviews were later reprinted in Chuck Welch's interesting book, *Networking Currents*.

Later on, in a 1986 visit to New York, I did a lot of tapings that later became a series called *Chelseatapes 1-3*. These tapes contained interviews with John Cage and his relation to the Fluxus movement. Also, members of the Fluxus group such as Ken Friedman, Yoko Ono and Christo, and curator Jon Hendricks talked about their relation to the mail art movement. Finally, artists and writers like Ray Johnson, Peter Frank, Carlo Pittore, Morgan O'Hara, Chuck Welch, Arleene Schloss, Jack Ox, Gianberto Vanni, Rosalind Solomon, Mark Bloch, and others spoke about the history of mail art and the mail art network's relationship to the whole art scene today.

It has not always been as easy as it might appear to introduce mail art to the average viewer, listener, etc. From the inception of *Night Exercise,* numbers of bureaucrats have created difficulties for further development of the project. Struggles with a variety of institutions and persons have delayed many other projects such as books and records. There are informative documentary catalogues of *Audiocatalogue* from Stockholm and Malmõo Moderna art museums. From the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm one can find the *Audiocatalogue*[5] and from the Sõdertolje we have the *Videocatalogue,*[6] which dealt with mail art and video art. And finally, also a smaller, combination catalogue from Franklin Furnace in New York called *Night Exercise.*[7]

Excerpts of the programs are available for listening in different archives, museums and at Sveriges Radio Archive for films, TV-programs and audiotapes. There are also many bootleg recordings and tapes that, in a way, flatter me. I do hope that this material gives stimulus to others in their own creative activities and arouses a greater curiosity in audio, video and mail art as artforms.

After writing almost forty letters a day for ten years, I finally decided to take a break from mail art and from my job as a TV/radio director/producer at Sveriges radio/TV. Since then, I am directing documentary films and TV entertainment, but I have my own style thanks to mail art. It has been very interesting, educational and a good time that I will never forget and will never quite recover from. Maybe these were the best years of my life?

1. (Ed. note:) Rod Summers is a visual, concrete poet living in Maastricht, The Netherlands. His recorded avant-garde poetry and audio drama works *(e.g., Helgisaga)* have been played throughout Europe and North America. Zev is a European avant-garde drummer. Klaus Groh is a German Neo-Dadaist mail artist whose *International Artists' Cooperation* newsletter was created in February 1972 as a networking clearing house for artists' information and contact.

2. Rolf Stridh, "Blended Stream of Memories," *Rõster i Radio*, April 1982, no. 18: 23.

3. Ilmar Taska, "Swedish Television's 'Night Exercise,' *Video Guide*, January 1985, VII: 31, 18.

4. Alison Homewood, "This May Be Art, But Is It Good TV?" *TV World*, August 1985, 36.

5. Peter R. Meyer, ed., *AUDIO, ljudkonst med Peter R. Meyer och radioprogrammet Nattövning*, Moderna Museet Stockholm, March 1983 (ISBN: 91-7100-226-x). This catalogue was used for exhibitions in Stockholm and Malmö.

6. Peter R. Meyer, ed., *Videocatalogue,* Södetälje Kulturnämnd, March 1984.

7. Peter R. Meyer, ed., *Night Exercise—Catalogue*, New York State Council on the Arts and The Swedish Information Service: Franklin Furnace, New York, April 1985.

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ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 26

NETWORKS WITH AND WITHOUT TECHNOLOGY: ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAIL ART AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS ART

MIT Mitropoulos

Mail art was a natural for me, because I come from the networks background of growing up on ocean-going boats, and my extended family were so many coloured pins on a world map—themselves never in one place for very long. Similarly, my Ph.D. work at Edinburgh University in 1974 was in the study of Space Networks.[1]

When my female models and I found ourselves geographically separated due to today's lifestyles, we started creating and exchanging cultural objects by post to keep our energy flowing over distances. My models had to assume my presence over the distances; they used my mailed suggestions and materials to perform and record that performance. Later on I became aware of mail art as an established activity with a name, joined it, and referred to my artist-model work as MA-performance,[2,3] which I extended to include models I had never met at the time, or ever will again.

As an environmental artist and communications researcher, since 1979 I have pursued parallel work in mail art and telecommunications art, the latter activity falling within the art-science-technology context. I owe mail art, because besides the pleasure of being part of the mail art network, mail art, as compared to telecommunications art, proved high in privacy (necessary for the intimate communications of artist-model) and low on logistics. Mail art was much cheaper, no special equipment was required (no compatibility problems either), and simultaneous performances in different parts of the world could be arranged. In one of my simultaneous performances, for example, three models performed separately, but simultaneously in three different time zones. Conceptually together, but geographically separate, one model (Pat Larter) was in Sidney, Australia, another model (Anne Queudeville) was in Caen, France, and the third model (Rini Rubini) was in San Diego, California.

In later years I had incorporated mail art material into telecommunication art processes, and managed to gain an insight into communications processes in general. The latter I articulated and started feeding it into telecommunication art as early as 1981.[4] At the time I was a Research Fellow at Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) and involved in research on communication aesthetics. I also worked as communications consultant during the 1979–1985 period for Educational Video Resources of M.I.T. on issues relating to organization of space using telecommunications, was a member of the city of Cambridge/USA Cable TV Commission, and did the research for UNESCO on 2-way interactive cable TV systems in the USA.[5] These cable TV research projects remind me of the Reading, Pa/USA Cable TV system, an excellent example of technology suited to a public policy strictly for the benefit of the public. The mayor at the time, Karen Miller, described the system as "great community, although bad TV," and this is what mail art activity is to me: high on community, low on aesthetics.

I believe in a twin identity for mail art: one, the everlasting, big, open, invaluable network of easy access, and two, some specific, demanding activities for in-depth exploration of the mail art process. The first one defines

mail art as a "cultural phenomenon," will get you a bulky archive in no time, a long list of addresses, and the daily feeling of an ever-replenished community. This must be preserved at all costs. The second one is as demanding and fulfilling as any other creative activity either in art, science, or technology. Both identities afford us a relatively logistics-free platform to do research on communications.

Telecommunication artists, especially those who don't have any other communications background, have a lot to learn from entering the mail art networks, which means that mail artists have an advantage, if they see it and use it. For instance, having realized that meaningful communication was becoming inversely proportional to the growing channels of communication (whether with or without technology) made me take a look in the early 1980s for other mail artists with concerns similar to mine. But the replies I was getting to this think-about-mail art effort are best characterized by Vittore Baroni's answer (following his Think About Mail Art project) when I pressed him[6] with a text making an analogy between mail art and CETI (Communications with Extraterrestrial Intelligence). He replied with a mixture of humor, social wisdom of the time and exasperation: "Well, who cares? I am not Batman!" and I loved it. Clearly it was five years too early for reflection.[7,8]

Today, more mail artists look into science, and even more are using communications technology. Therefore, it seems to me the right time to briefly go through art-science-technology, at least the version I have been operating in. It is certainly not art as it used to be, where we simply would now produce it by referring to scientific processes or by using high tech tools (which would mean that aesthetics remained the same). Nor is it a cultural product as it used to be, now simply transported over a distance via a communications channel (which would also mean that aesthetics remained the same). It is the reciprocal influence of art on science and technology. For instance, artists experience daily the *electronic space*[9] reality, so it is only inevitable that new aesthetic elements will emerge — much to the chagrin and disagreement of the art market. Mail artists could contribute very well from their experiences.

Drawing from the network processes I've been involved in,[10,11,12] I have summed up three new elements for New Aesthetics: 1) Control (of the networks, for instance); 2) Knowledge (as processed information); 3) Three Levels of Complexity of Interactivity: "Hi there!" (acknowledgement, without necessarily pursuing the exchange), "I am here! Where are you?!" (establishing common references, towards complex interaction), and finally Complex Interaction. I have used these three elements in MA-performance, interactive video installations, and for Geopolitical Art, like my project *Line of the Horizon*.

Science itself has moved from just separating things (and putting them into some order for our understanding and for solving problems) into focusing on the connections between things. In science there is beauty in simplicity: the simplest solution to a problem is very often the correct one.[13] Similarly, the simplicity of the Pioneer-6 design is now being appreciated. Launched in the mid-1960s with an expected lifespan of six months, Pioneer-6 lent a helping hand to the landing on the moon (by locating solar storms), and is still operating. And I have just returned from a medicine-science-technology meeting (Advanced informatics in medicine, for the European Community) in Sevilla, Spain, where the confidentiality issue was strongly raised: the wide use of computers will make it impossible for patients to refuse their consent for having data on them stored in a computer. Terrorists, it was further hinted, may kill a politician through manipulation of his medical care data card.

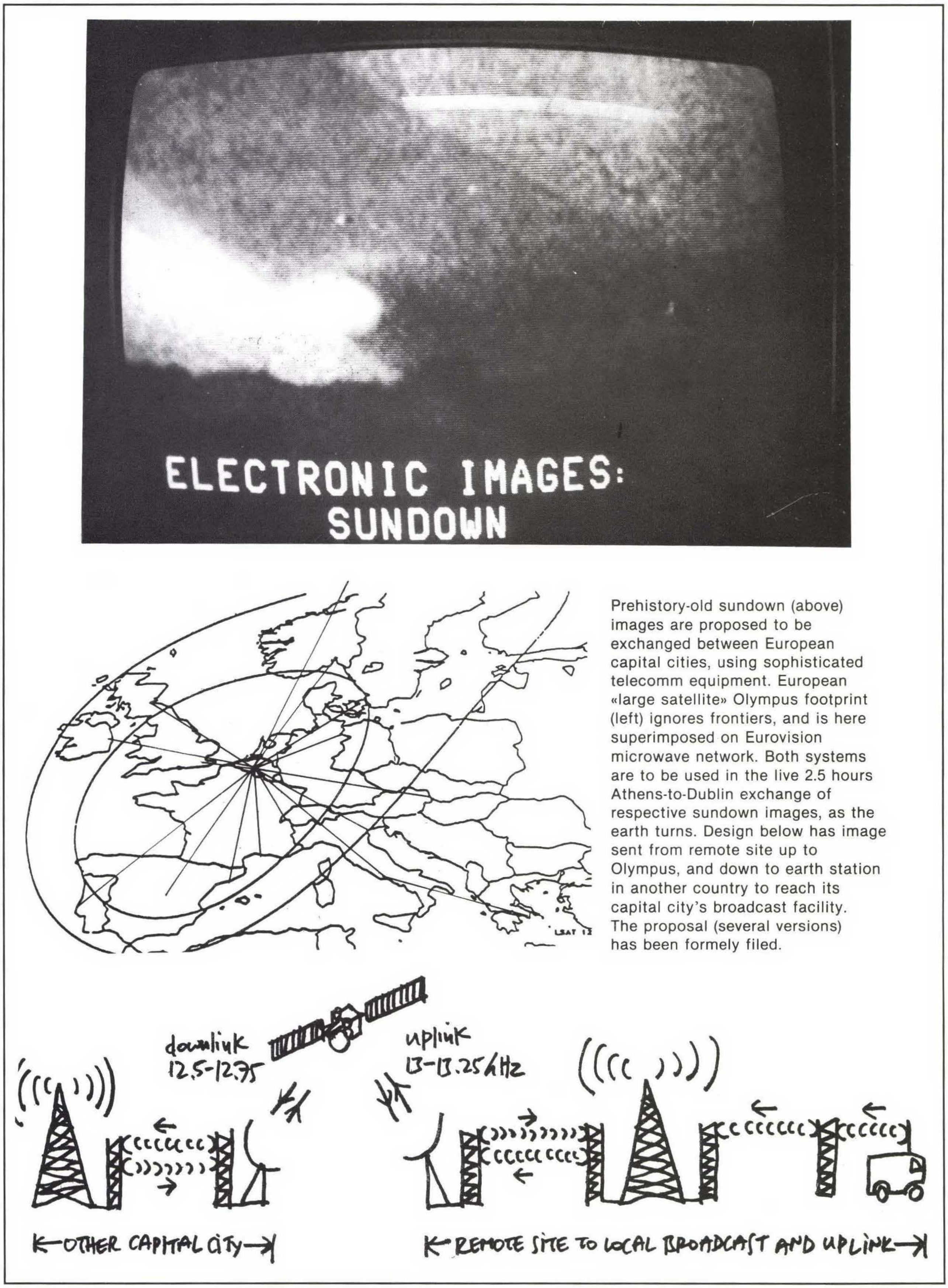


Figure 99. MIT Mitropoulos, *Geopolitical Art: Line of the Horizon*, Greece, 1989. Poster detail.

Technology is not all benefits. Privatization of computers has brought triviality. PCs, falling prey to human error, can also be targeted for attacks (intentional human errors). This is especially dangerous in computer networks and two-way "response" systems.[14] Certainly it isn't enough for artists to set up communication networks. The military and financiers have done it before us. We need to work on the content of interactivity as well. Otherwise, if we remain passive, the medium will remain the only message. On the other hand, since the setting up of a network for technology-mediated communication is both time-consuming and expensive, we naturally expect a proportionally consistent content. The geopolitical art project "Line of the Horizon" for example, has, since we carried it out in 1986, been presented to a telecommunications conference, an aesthetics conference, and is being published in a Science of Human Settlements review. It focused on the Mediterranean, then extended for 8,500 nautical miles. It was ten months of work, from original concept to collected data evaluation. The network of twenty-seven participant nodes (twenty-one Mediterranean cities, and two of the rest were ships in oceans flanking the Mediterranean.) and their compatible telefax equipment took 6.5 months to set up, and was activated for 6.5 hours. An east-west exchange of respective lines of horizon created a conceptual horizon from the Indian Ocean to New York, through the Mediterranean. Since in a network each node is both center and periphery, our facsimile network could have been activated from any node (which proved very useful when we were faced with administrative problems of control in the node we were situated).

Line of Horizon was a geopolitical art project[15] in the art-science-technology context, the same as with current proposals in progress: they relate to the survival of the Mediterranean sea turtle, the division of the island of Cyprus by occupation forces, citizen participation in mass media, and the movement of the Earth as related to the 1992 European Union (Fig. 99). As in mail art, "Line of Horizon" was operated on a planetary scale. But we were simultaneously live. The 6.5 hours of activation had us operate in six different time zones simultaneously. In telecommunications art, unlike receiving mailed messages, there is hardly time for reflection, so you need to be prepared for a variety of alternatives, and have internalized the communications process well. Such live communications can either be limited to a pre-arranged exchange, like respective lines of horizon, or involve a more complex interaction that may develop.

Artists, scientists, technologists, we are all faced with the challenge of the planetary dimension, and the challenge of use of technology. Today's technology, since communications tech merged with information tech in the mid 1950s, is what use we make of it. It is what Merlin the



Figure 100. MIT Mitropoulos, A 1986 mail art project later included in the 1989 *Line of the Horizon.* Bottles were thrown by Mitropoulos into the Mediterranean Ocean.

magician was in the Excalibur era: a blessing to some, a curse to others. Networking makes it possible to listen to a loved one's voice as s/he whispers over continental distances. Similarly, in one day an infection can take world-wide proportions: AIDS is as much a current term as a CETI, or INMARSAT,[16] or a PCN.[17] PCNs should start becoming available, allowing for person-to-person communication, and allowing us to be permanently in touch. But how desirable is this? How can we retain control—which will further allow us to choose, for example, to retain the participatory democracy that two-way interactive cable TV systems can offer?[18]

I will conclude this brief, autobiographical essay by expressing how lucky I feel to experience today's networking. It follows the natural human development from the obsidian prototraders[19] to the eighth century B.C. Greeks who organized human settlements in the Mediterranean, to the navigators Dias, Columbus, Magellan of the fifteenth century, and others up to the eighteenth century, to today's exploration beyond the solar system. In the current geopolitical reality, access to communication networks, with and without technology, can be assured. Let us use it creatively and wisely.

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1. In Space Networks space is considered as a network, and not space-as-place.
2. MIT Mitropoulos, "Towards Performance," *M.I.T. Humanities*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980.
3. Niti Salloway, "Dear MIT," book review of 'Towards Performance,' R.Ho.K. poster, Flemish School of Fine Arts: Brussels, Belgium, 1980.
4. Eric Gidney, "Artists Use of Telecommunications," correspondence with this author, *Leonardo*, 1983, 16:4.
5. MIT Mitropoulos, "Public Participation as Access, in Cable TV in the U.S.A.," in 'Communications With and Without Technology,' *Ekistics*, October, 1983, 50:302, 385–392.
6. "Dear Vittore," in 'From Communications to Telecommunications,' Pocket Guide to the 'Line of the Horizon' project, Ministry of Culture, Greece, 1986.
7. Chuck Welch's, *Networking Currents: Contemporary Mail Art Subjects and Issues*, Sandbar Willow Press: Boston, Massachusetts, 1986 reflects, in part, a philosophical, critical investigation into the phenomenon of networking art.
8. Günther Ruch's, "International Mail Art Network," and "Sightseeing," *Clinch*, Geneve-Peney, Switzerland, Nos. 7-8, 1985, documented, as did Welch, international networking projects.
9. *Electronic space* is one type of Behavioral space, which at the turn of a switch or the push of a button is turned on or off. Behavioral space is the space as each one of us experiences it by being involved in an activity in it. This is in contrast to Euclidean space that is independent of anybody's behavior in it, and is described/measured in feet or meters.
10. MIT Mitropoulos, "On Interactivity," in Theo van der Aa, ed., *Digital Media and the Arts*, The Netherlands: Limburg University, 1985.
11. MIT Mitropoulos, "Aesthetics Reconsidered: Electronic Space, Mail Art, and Spaces for Communications," unpublished paper, CAVS, M.I.T., Boston, Massachusetts, 1983.
12. MIT Mitropoulos, "Network Aesthetics," *Ekistics*, 55:330–331, May–October, 1988.
13. Moreton Moore, "On Beauty in Science," International Aesthetics Congress, Nottingham University, England, 1988.
14. A two-way *interactive* system differs from two-way *response* system. The former allows for either side to initiate the exchange. The latter has one side alone capable to initiate it, whilst the other side is best defined by its memory, from which it is called to retrieve specific information by responding to the caller (example: videotex). In the QUBE cable TV system (of Columbus, Ohio fame) the computer responds to subscribers, and its memory gradually builds a profile of each one of them according to their requests (what to buy, what to see, whom to vote for, etc.). That information may be sought by commercial organizations for gain, or national security agencies for purposes of control.
15. A poster document on geopolitical art printed on the occasion of a slide presentation I did in 1989 can be requested from M. Santorineos, Art-technology section, Contemporary Arts Center I.T., 48 Armatolon + Klefton, Athens II47I, Greece.
16. INMARSAT is the International Maritime Satellite Organization. It allows ships and mobile land units to check automatically on their latitude-longitude. It also picks and locates sources of distress signals in all oceans.
17. PCNs are superphones of the Personal Communications Network, which uses ultra-high-frequency radio bands. Through them we will soon have a personal number rather than one home number, a second office number, etc., as in today's fixed-wire networks of place-to-place.
18. MIT Mitropoulos, "Implications of Cable TV for Participatory Democracy," Cities, England, May 1985.
19. Prototraders created maritime networks over surprisingly long distances. They exchanged goods for other goods or services, for survival purposes, rather than through any currency for the accumulation of wealth. In prehistory, the volcanic material obsidian was most precious since it was used for tools (to cut and pierce), weapons (spearheads and arrowheads) and means of decoration (body ornaments, floortiles, mirrors). Mariners took their chances, in an era before sails were invented, transporting obsidian over very long distances from original sources.

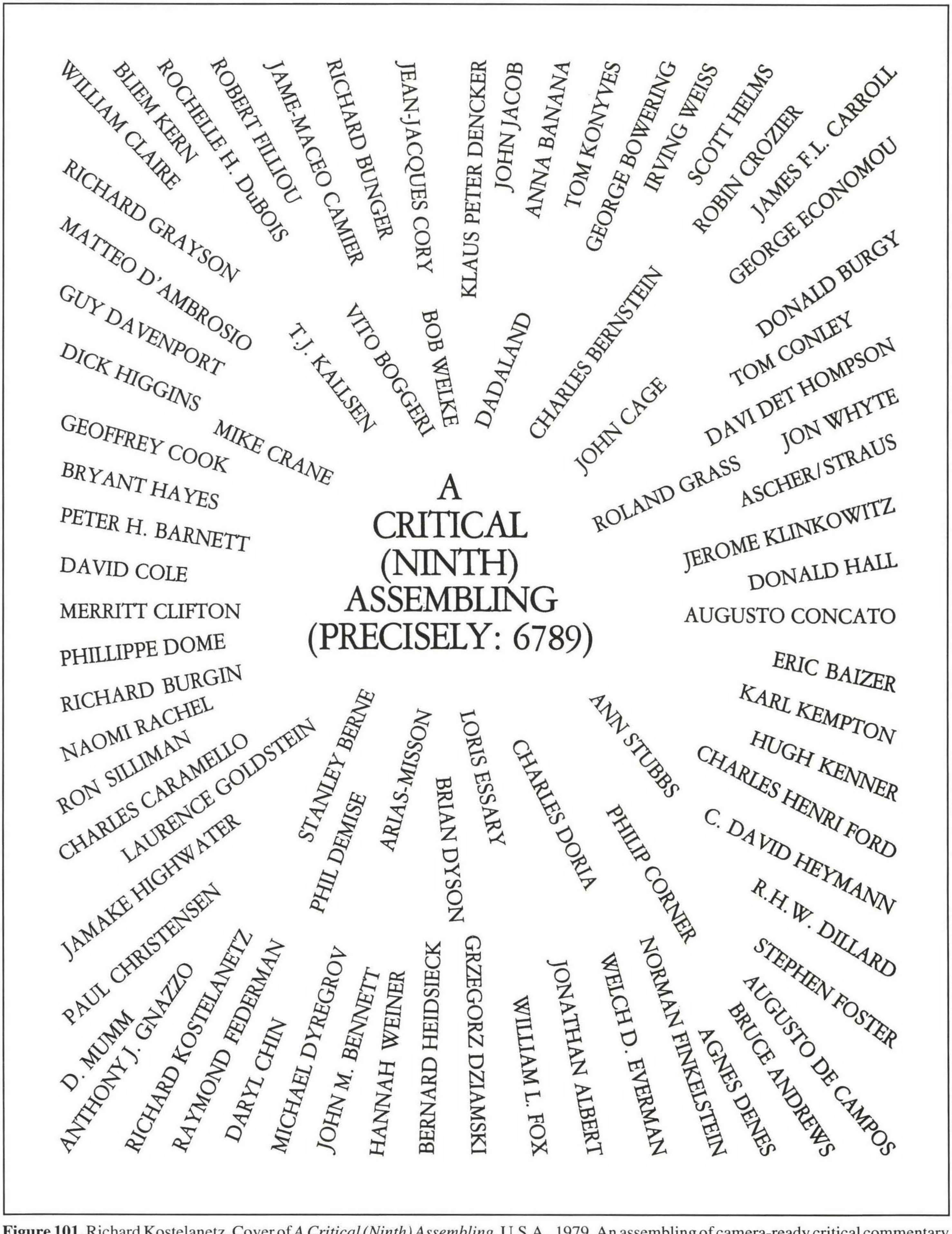


Figure 101. Richard Kostelanetz, Cover of *A Critical (Ninth) Assembling*, U.S.A., 1979. An assembling of camera-ready critical commentary on experimental literature around the world.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 27

ASSEMBLING IN THE MAIL ART SPIRIT

Richard Kostelanetz

From my point of view, I scarcely thought of myself as participating in mail art, as commonly defined, though certain ideas that I've advocated over the past quarter century have influenced the climate. The principal idea was that aspiring artists and writers should not wait for the standard institutions of accreditation, whether publishers or galleries, to "take on" their work. They should publish/ exhibit themselves, forming their own institutions if necessary, if their work would be circulated. I remember, when I was beginning my writing career, hearing conventionally ambitious writers say that they would "give" their work only to "the big six publishers." To the best of my recollection, none of those self-deceived wise guys are visible today. Where they went I cannot tell you; they simply disappeared and are, in professional terms, dead. In this respect, I supported mail art as an alternative to the gallery system. More important, in 1970 I joined a similarly situated colleague (who has since disappeared) in founding *Assembling* which would extend the alternative-distribution principle into collective self-publication.

What we did was invite artists and writers who were known to be doing otherwise unpublishable work to send a thousand copies of up to four pages (8 1/2" x 11") of whatever they wanted to include, which we assembled in alphabetical order, returning two bound copies to each contributor, ideally selling off the rest to defray collation and administrative costs. As I wrote in the preface to the initial *Assembling*:

> As young writers of stylistically 'different' poetry and prose, we faced not only the inevitable objections to our precocity, but also the equally inevitable resistances to our wayward literary purposes. And so we wanted an institution that would publish alternative work by imaginative artists who genuinely believed in what they did. Since rejections often came with the excuse, particularly from editors pretending to sympathy, that "our printer can't handle this," it seemed best to overcome this obstacle by direct action—by becoming one's own publisher, which is more practicable in this era of easily accessible photographic reproduction processes; for the oldest truth is that, when other demands are more pressing, the writer must do more than just write.

While there is no doubt that artists and writers should ultimately be paid for what they do, there are times when every one of us feels that it would be worth a few dollars and a little effort to put into public print something that otherwise could not be placed. Indeed, such self-publication could stand as a fundamental test of creative seriousness—not just in pre-Gorby Russia, whose censorship was familiar, but in the United States as well. A further assumption I made at the time was that, in part because of the increasing number of aspiring young people entering every art, there would be a need in all the arts for "alternative institutions" simply to cope with the growing populace. (I still think this the most important cultural development of the 1970s, though disappointed in the policies and attitudes of those institutions that have survived.)

We advised our invited contributors to put their names on the faces of their work, as we ran no table of contents, and to center their contributions to the right, leaving at least



Figure 102. J. Nebraska Gifford, Photo collage of Richard Kostelanetz. Photograph © 1980 J. Nebraska Gifford.

an inch on the left-hand margin, because *Assembling* promised to collate the contents alphabetically (thereby avoiding invidious distinctions of placement). Since all copyrights, which are the literary form of "property," were returned to the contributors, *Assembling* could make no money from subsequent republication. And once the thousand bound copies were gone, it would be impossible for us (or anyone else) to "reprint" the entire issue. For over a decade *Assemblings* were beautiful and thick (with one running to over 370 pages), with a wide variety of alternative artist/writers publishing at their best, unfettered by editorial authority.

We abrogated editorial authority not because we were rudderless or lazy (though we never agonized over whether something or someone would be "appropriate to our pages"), but because we wanted a compositional structure radically different from the restrictive, self-serving nature of traditional editorial processes. We wanted a genuine participatory democracy that successfully redistributed both initiative and responsibility. The only control left to us was the invitation itself, so that just as unfamiliar would-be collaborators were asked to show us examples of their work before receiving an invitation, so a few previous contributors were not invited again. The almost paradoxical reason was

not that we thought their work "no good," whatever that might be, or that we wanted to impose a particular style or taste, but that their work was insufficiently unconventional, which is to say that it did not need *Assembling*. We were obliged, in principle, to keep the medium committed to alternative, "otherwise unpublishable," imaginative work—a domain that was, to be sure, elastically defined.

We discovered that *Assembling* imposed a different creative psychology upon its artists and writers. A prospective contributor to a conventional magazine tries to blend into a circumscribed style and subject matter of that journal; he or she wants his or her work "to fit," to please the editorial authorities. By contrast, a contributor to *Assembling* knew that, since "rejection" is not a worry, he or she was free to create something that will stand out. Rather than attempting to blend his or her work into the rest of the book, each contributor could compete, as aggressively as he or she wanted (and could afford), in technology and imagination; contributor freedom became, we found, a license to excel.

The resulting *Assemblings* confirmed our initial polemical point — both the book itself and its contents were unlike anything seen before. It also provided a radically different reading experience. Whereas most periodicals are designed to create uniform, uninterrupted reading, *Assembling* offers continual surprises from page to page—one contribution must be read, the next looked at; one is easily understood, another far more difficult. Furthermore, whereas most magazines come with an editorial imprimatur that implicitly suggests to readers that the material is good and thus worthy of attention, *Assembling* suggests only that its material is "otherwise unpublishable" and thus that the reader must decide how "good" any contribution is. Most readers will agree with our general assessment that, though some contributions are extraordinary, much of it is junk. However, the editors are no more sure than any other reader which is which.

However, getting support for what we did was almost impossible, more than one granting agency scandalizing itself in the process. Since *Assembling* was much larger than other magazines, publishers who often doubled as grants-judges were envious; and the fact that our contributors paid to appear in our pages didn't make them feel any better. Since we refused conventional editorial authority, *Assembling* was also different in ways that power-seeking personalities found unacceptable.

Though *Assembling* itself is not mentioned in any critical history of American literary magazines (other than my own) and recent similarly structured magazines never acknowledge its pioneering example, I was pleased to notice on p. 477 of Mike Crane and Mary Stofflet's *Correspondence Art* (San Francisco, 1984) the results of a survey measuring which publications were most significant and had greatest influence. *Assembling* scored high in several categories.

The second failure of our dream has been the last step. We weren't able to sell off the excess as easily as hoped for; and rather than destroy those copies—an unforgivable sin, given how much effort the contributors made—I have personally moved them through several storage places over the past dozen years, hoping (no, praying) that someday some dealer would take these off my hands, or that individual issues would finally sell out. All our copies of *Fourth Assembling* (1973) got lost somewhere, so I can't even offer complete sets. What I can guarantee is that anyone picking up *Assembling* will find not only a model in the mail art spirit, but an alternative reading experience.

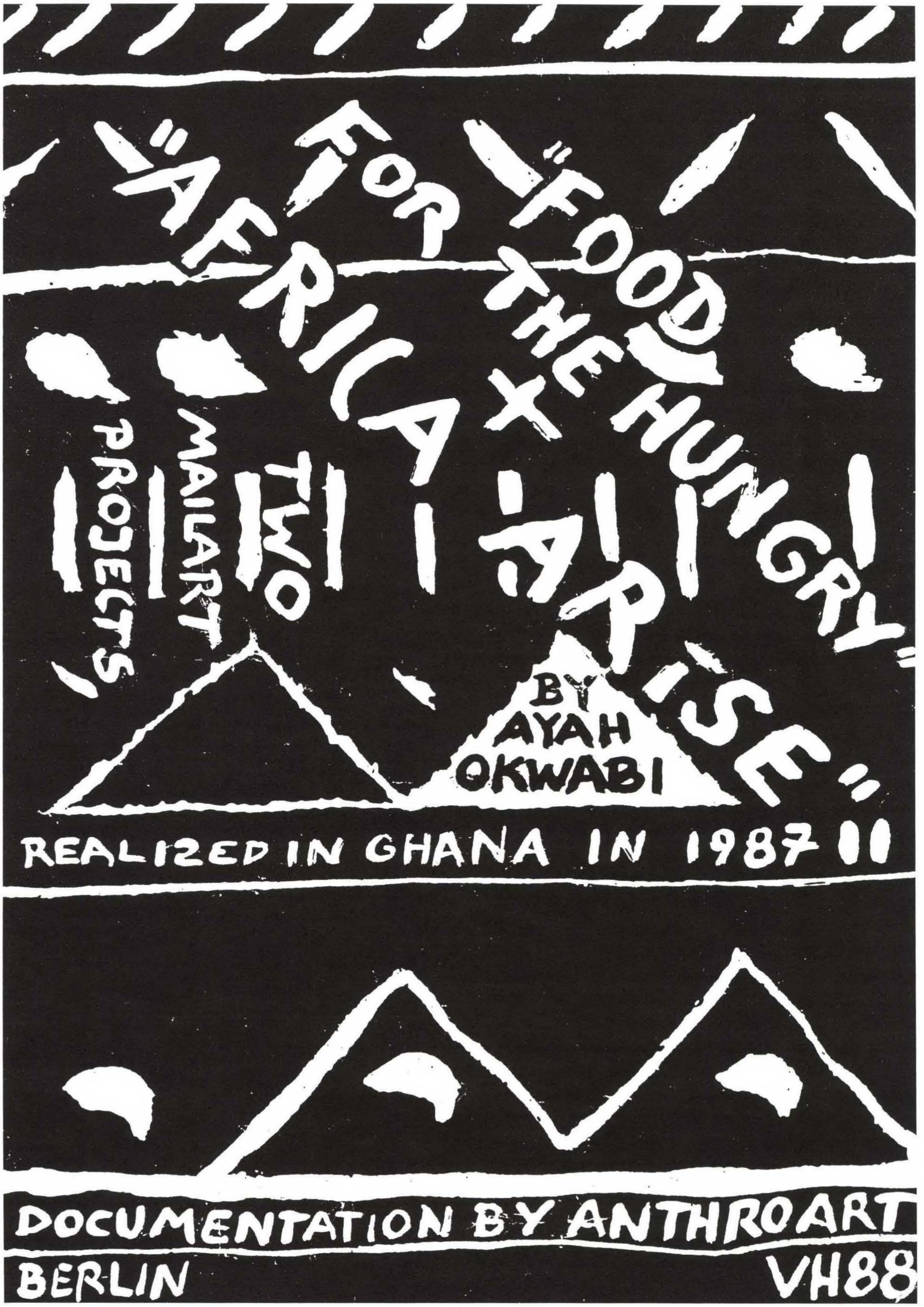


Figure 103. Ayah Okwabi and Volker Hamann, *Africa Arise*, Ghana, 1987. Mail Art Catalogue Cover.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 28

NETWORKING STRATEGIES: AN AFRICAN VIEW

Ayah Okwabi

Networking Strategies—An African View is a mail art show theme intended to reflect the best view of the social, economical and political reality of Africa today. By projecting the African reality, one can inform the outside world about current situations in Africa. This view might mobilize international opinion for the transformation that is long overdue!

It is against this background that I selected the themes for my *Africa Arise/Food for the Hungry* mail art show in 1987 (Fig. 103). For example, Namibia, Africa's fifty-first state to achieve independence, has since then become free and Nelson Mandela, a staunch fighter against apartheid, has been released from prison. The food problem still persists in some African countries. Clearly, such themes address the practical needs and concerns of the African people, the majority of whom live in villages. At the same time, one venue of a mail art show was Kwamoso, a village in the eastern region of Ghana where volunteers at an international workcamp were constructing a Junior Secondary School (JSS) classroom. Again, the idea of a JSS is an attempt at reforming Ghana's educational system to orient it to job possibilities and the needs of the nation.

The theme of my last project, *Africa Arise*, was a look at the issue of population growth in Africa. Mail art is a relatively cheap form of small-group communication compared to the information revolution. This so-called information revolution is a myth to the people who dwell in the villages of Africa because it presupposes equipment, which is either too expensive or inappropriate through lack of basic infrastructure.

Of course, there is no definite cutting point in the continuum between a collection of individuals such as one might find waiting for a bus or in a mail art catalogue and a fully organized "group." There is also no definite border between the intimate, face-to-face group and the large, formal "group." In order for a collection of individuals to be considered a group there must be some interaction. The following four features usually emerge as a collection of individuals that develop as a group.

First, members have one or more motives or goals that determine the direction in which the group will move. In the case of mail art, the objective is networking. Second, the members develop a set of norms that establish the boundaries in which interpersonal relations may be established and activities carried on, e.g., the conditions of no fees charged, no rejections, and documentation to all senders are values that all mail artists are expected to uphold, although it is difficult for me to show pornographic material under certain circumstances in Ghana for reasons of cultural sensibilities! Third, if interaction continues, a set of roles becomes stabilized and the new group is differentiated from other groups. Also, a network of interpersonal attraction develops on the basis of "likes" and "dislikes" of members for one another. In other words, a small group is any number of persons engaged in interaction, including face-to-face or long-distance communication in which each member gets some impression or perception of

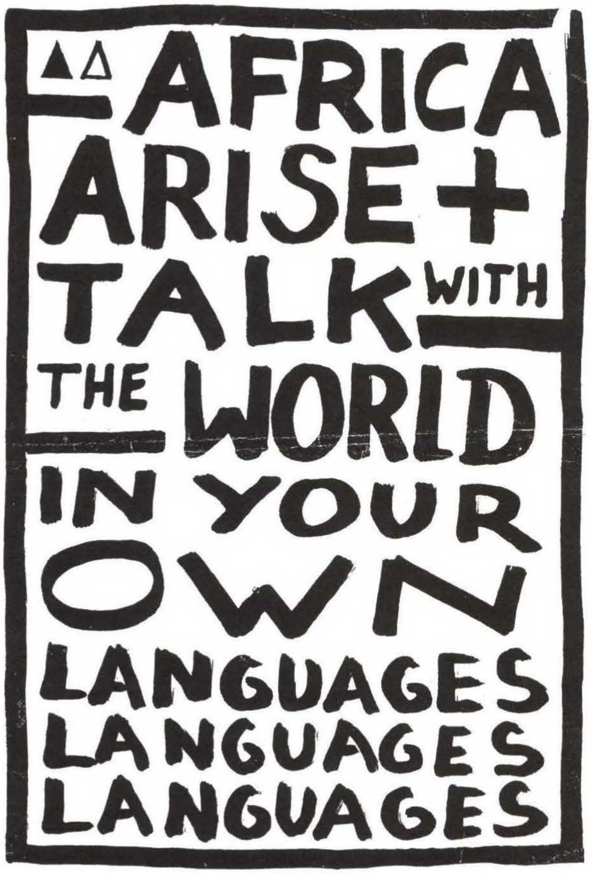


Figure 104. Ayah Okwabi, *Africa Arise and Talk with the World*, Ghana, 1987. Mail Art Show Invitation.

each other member. This perception is distinct enough so that one can, either at the time or in later questioning, give some reaction to each of the others as an individual, even though it be only to recall that the other person was present.

Out of my eleven years' experience working on various community-based projects in the villages of Ghana, I would suggest the following themes to mail artists as a basis for networking strategies from other cultures who want to relate to Africa: 1) addressing basic needs like housing, nutrition, clothing, etc.; 2) intercultural understanding—trying to understand the differences between cultures and to combine various approaches whenever possible; 3) use of pictorial presentation, e.g., postcards, photos, etc., as a means of overcoming language barriers between cultures; 4) music—as a musically-oriented people, the exchange of audiocassettes with music or programs recorded from local radio stations or performances; 5) keeping objects that are to be exchanged within a reasonable size that facilitates affordable mailing costs; 6) finding out the different interests or hobbies of potential partners to bring about meaningful exchange; 7) children; 8) women.

Because of the ever-rising cost of international mail, one basic obstacle to a wider involvement of persons in Africa is a financial consideration. Nevertheless, whatever a person sows in mail art is to be reaped in the not-so-distant future. Postal services outside the urban areas are either very slow or virtually non-existent. Linguistic barriers exist because there are many languages spoken in Africa. Nevertheless, mail art via the international postal system offers the cheapest alternative for interconnecting the First world to the Third world, or the North to the South.

The reaction of the people who saw *Networking Strategies: An African View* was a mixed one. Some were impressed by the attempt to promote grass-roots communication, some saw it as a form of international communication aimed at promoting broader understanding between the North and the South, while others did not understand the significance of mail art, or were simply amused by some of the sayings or photos, or simply suspicious of what it all meant! Above all, the impact of the show has been a positive one. First, this form of communication, until now, was virtually unknown in Africa. A show of this kind cannot be expected to generate a uniform reaction from its audience. Second, from the perspective of the audience, one could see the way that outsiders reacted to the pertinent issues in Africa. The artifacts received for the show were a reflection of the pictures that

mail artists have in their mind about Africa. Indeed, the show provided a meeting point for the scattered impressions of artists, a kind of life-size collage of mind images!

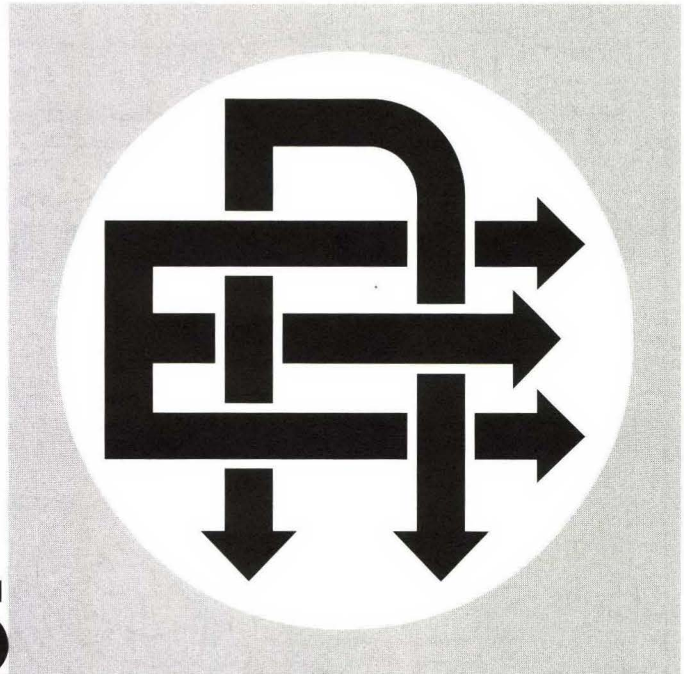
Mail art represents an alternative communication, a way to respond to the communication challenges of our time—not only in the developing countries of the South, but also in the industrialized regions of the North and South-east Asia. The objective is free flow of information, democratization and grass-root development in the world of the African human-scale represented by the village or small urban neighborhood.

What is the future of mail art networking in Africa? Colonial barriers of language differences and communication patterns are big obstacles in the way of organizing a Pan-African Network. The rising cost of sending international mail is yet another problem. It is possible, however, that more people will become involved in mail art and in time a stronger bond of cooperation will be forged between Africa and the global mail art network. To achieve this end mail art will need to address themes that are interesting and relevant to an African perspective.

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Communication
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Coco Gordon



PART 5 COMMUNICATION ISSUES

Network communication, process aesthetics and controversial issues are often an essential aspect of exchange among networker artists. Effective communication and criticism are necessary if mail artists who network are to develop aesthetically or ethically. Theaesthetic value of mail art communication lies within its power to challenge, interpret, and transform reality. The ethical value of mail art lies in enabling artists to question and evaluate established knowledge and authority. Here, topics range from the aesthetics of communication, to criticism of medium and message from men and women active in mail art and art that networks.



Figure 105. David Zack, *The Correspondence Artist*, Mexico, 1983. Pen and Ink Drawing. Page from Zack's *Correspondence Novels*.

CHAPTER 29

CORRESPONDING WORLDS: DEBATE AND DIALOGUE

Chuck Welch

Mail artists create corresponding worlds out of correspondence exchange. Here artists struggle with relationships that harmonize, conflict, and sometimes emerge in passionate debate. Resolution of issues among mail artists is often elusive, but out of these conflicts a global community has been formed, creativity has flourished, and personal languages of the heart have evolved.

The Eternal Network is a decentralized art forum, both grapevine and global-village meeting house. Mailboxes and personal computers are open diaries where shared entries are drawn, read, and rewritten like endless visual chapters in a correspondence novel. Pluralism shields all networking sensibilities from any dominant leader or opinion. It is this shared, plural democracy that makes mail art revolutionary, yet vulnerable to petty factionalism, egotism, and jealousy.

Every year there are participants who "burn out" of the network, prognosticating mail art's death in the wake of their departure. But dropouts are always replaced with new, enthusiastic voices and the eternal network wheel endures, gaining momentum with each revolving year. The author tallied lists of mail art participants in sixteen 1993 mail art shows/projects and found over 6,000 individual artists' addresses. What characteristic network ideals, ethics, debates, and dialogues fuel the continuous evolution of such an enormous phenomenon? Why do individuals leave, and how does the mail art phenomenon attract such a large, colorful, international diversity of artistic sensibilities?

Evolving Network Ideals

Independence, individuality, and democracy are the ideals most fiercely defended in network mailstreams, but these characteristics are often stronger than the spirit of dialogue. That's why some issues bring network artists together almost by reflex action; they join to protest censorship, they admonish cultural authoritarianism, they fight system and hierarchy. But beyond these shared ideals mail artists sometimes have fallen into anti-art hierarchies, empty rhetoric, patriarchal manifestos, slogans, truisms, and guidelines intended to protect an ethereal, open realm that asks for no boundaries.

Looking back to mail art's inception, individual freedom and democracy emerged as central ethics related to the volatile 1960s and 1970s culture: a time when definitions of social, cultural, religious and economic values exploded. Art and communication were being stripped of elitism, re-evaluated and made accessible in street art and Happenings. Buckminster Fuller predicted a networking Spaceship Earth and mass-media expert Marshall McLuhan had enormous influence envisioning an age when information would be recycled from one medium to another. Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, a friend and publisher of McLuhan, coined the term "intermedia."

From the revolutionary cultural milieu of the 1960s and 1970s appeared Thomas Albright's "New Art School: Correspondence." Albright, an art critic for the *San*

Francisco Chronicle and regular contributor to *Art News*, made the first published reference to correspondence art in two issues (April 13 and 27, 1972) of *Rolling Stone Magazine*.[1] Here are found purposes, motives, ethics and values that encapsulate intense debates among advocates of correspondence art and mail art activities.

Among Albright's description of correspondence artists and their activities appear democratic objectives: 1) "guerilla ideals aimed to strip 'art,' 'education,' and 'philosophy' of their customary elitist trappings; 2) bringing art into everyone's mail as well as to the street; and 3) information exchange that disowns the 'artist' label."[2] Correspondence art objectives included: 4) "process, communication and evolving mass consciousness; 5) exploring and expanding the nature of the communication process itself; and 6) an interest in communication as spirituality and mysticism."[3]

Today over twenty years after his article, Albright's observations remain pertinent criteria for assessing network activities, debate and dialogue. All of Albright's descriptions prevail today partly because technology has revolutionized information exchange. Today's information networks are invisible, alternative express highways that circumvent hierarchy with freely distributed ideas, concepts and values. Prophetically, poetic Fluxus visionary Robert Filliou's "eternal network" is indeed today's invisible, ethereal, open, interconnected, planetary network.

Correspondence Art and Mail Art Exchange

From the mid-Sixties, debates among correspondence artists revolved around the central question of whether correspondence should remain an intimate, private club or a social and cultural forum. When Albright wrote in the 1972 issue of *Rolling Stone,* correspondence art was defined with an open attitude for expanding the nature of communication as a process. Mail art, a term that hadn't yet been introduced, later came to be associated with concerns for social awareness and responsibilities. Fluxus artists advocating both viewpoints interacted with Ray Johnson's New York Correspondence School (NYCS) during the 1960s. Since 1966, Fluxus artist and NYCS member Ken Friedman was distributing contact lists that extended the boundaries of Johnson's "private correspondence school." From 1970 to 1973, two Canadian-funded artist publishing projects, *FILE Magazine* and Image Bank's *International Image Exchange Directory* became decentralized clearing houses that introduced correspondence art to a global audience in North American, South America, Europe and Australia. Albright's *Rolling Stone* article about correspondence art appeared (1972) and was followed a



Figure 106. Sally Mericle, *Mail Art My Ass: Looks Like Junk to Me*, U.S.A., 1989. Rubber Stamped Stampsheet.

year later by *Art in America*'s mail art essay by California "nut art" adherent, David Zack. Clearly, all the component parts for a mail art mass media blitz had informed and influenced an entire generation of international artists. Mail art arrived, emerging out of correspondence art, but arguments calling for intimate quality art exchanges widened the gulf between both sensibilities.

The Art in Mail Art: Quality Versus Quantity

Amidst the mail art media barrage, correspondence artists strongly objected to the junky, ephemeral quality of quick-copy mail art that was being generated and distributed in bulk throughout the international mails (Fig. 106). Conceptual artist Robert Cummings, admired and respected for his private, direct, one-to-one correspondence art, expressed disapproval in a letter review of a Neo-Dada exhibition appearing at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam: "The quick-copy mail art may pass in Vancouver or San Francisco as art, but wherever, it's not worth the paper it's on, nor the ink either; the utmost in idle activity."[4] Cummings abruptly withdrew from the network. That same year (1973) the editors of *FILE Magazine* published several editorials condemning "quikkopy crap" and "junk-mail," an unexpected move, considering *FILE Magazine*'s effort to take correspondence art before an international audience in three major issues dating from 1972 to 1973.

FILE's scathing attack on mail art was perceived by mail artists as a betrayal, and many reacted with articles, letters and new publications, pioneering mail art publications commonly known today as artist zines. Canadian performance artist Anna Banana jumped into mail art as a reaction to *FILE*'s mail art criticism, and with Bay Area Dadaist Bill Gaglione founded the dadazine *VILE*.[5] In 1973, Ken Friedman organized Omaha Flow Systems, an exhibition that interconnected museums, colleges, shopping malls, public schools, and artists in a global mail art networking exchange that set a precedent for today's international mail art shows. According to Friedman:

> Omaha Flow Systems was a contribution that the older parts of the (correspondence art) network did not entirely welcome: it opened up too much territory, it reduced the elite and special quality of information access and control that some key mail artists had at that time. It was another thing altogether for an unknown high school chemistry teacher or a bus driver or a housewife to enter the network with its implications of equality.[6]

Mail Art Shows

From Omaha Flow Systems to the present, mail art shows have remained an open gate to all individuals, artist or non-artist, and it has been the proliferation of these egalitarian shows that has given shape and form to the global network today. Mail art shows guarantee open accessibility to the mail art network and harken back to early network objectives stated by Albright in *Rolling Stone Magazine*: bringing art into everyone's mail as well as to the street, and exploring and expanding the nature of the communication process itself."[7]

Customary parameters for organizing mail art exhibitions continue to be simple and few: 1) anybody can organize mail art exhibitions; 2) a show theme is chosen and advertised in art publications or public spaces; 3) the organizer pledges to show all work entered; 4) there are no fees for entering mail art shows; 5) no work is returned to participants after the exhibition; 6) mail art show sponsors reciprocate with a free catalogue, usually including show documentation and the addresses of all participating mail artists.

These mail art show criteria have been designated as "guidelines," an unfortunate association of terminology that implies mail art is governed by dogmatic rules. Disagreement continues today whether these mail art show criteria are rules, guidelines or a custom that generally exists. Many people can agree that the custom is a dominant trend, while still setting different guidelines for a specific show or project. When mail artist Harley of Oberlin, Ohio curated Corresponding Worlds—Artists' Stamps at the Oberlin College Allen Memorial Art Museum (January 11, 1987–March 1, 1987), he clearly announced his decision to circumvent customary mail art guidelines. Instead, Harley selected stamps of "aesthetic quality" from the mail art network. In doing so, mail artists accepted his candor, trusted his judgment, and mailed stamp art for consideration. Yet in his opening catalogue statements, Harley challenged the contention that mail art and the art establishment remain separate worlds:

> ...I chose to curate an exhibition in the traditional manner as opposed to organizing an open mail-art exhibition. I realize that this is a controversial approach to the mail-art network that prides itself on its origins as an alternative to the labyrinth of the highly politicized "art world" of galleries, museums and collectors. Personally, I feel that the integration of the traditional art world structure and the mail-art network is inevitable. My response is that the mail-artist should play the pivotal role in this integration.[8]

In contrast to the Oberlin College stamp exhibition, Mail art's most controversial debate occurred in New York City at Franklin Furnace when art critic Dr. Ronny Cohen was accused of failing to honor the customary mail art guidelines. She, too, desired to exhibit the "Art" in mail art, and what ensued became mail art's first public debate.

The Franklin Furnace Mail Art Fiasco

The Franklin Furnace Mail Art Fiasco occurred in New York City, February 1984 because Dr. Cohen allegedly refused to exhibit all mail art entries at Franklin Furnace's *Mail Art Then and Now Mail Art International Show* (Fig. 107). Also at issue among mail artists who visited the show was the ambivalent manner in which the curator presented past and present mail artworks. Finally, mail artists never received a promised free catalogue from Franklin Furnace in exchange for the gift of individual artworks. A fiery declaration was addressed in an open letter to Dr. Cohen by New York mail artist Carlo Pittore.

> In your Franklin Furnace Mail Art Then and Now Exhibition (January 18 to March 10) which you curated and for which you received substantial funding from the National Endowment of the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts, Mail Art has been badly served by someone who appears to be an ally, and who, in fact, has presented a precious and sanitized and edited exhibition that does not provide, even minimally, an accurate sense of what international mail art is all about. Because I am so bitterly disappointed and angered by your contempt for, and disregard of, long-established and unalterable traditions of the multi-national mail artist network, I am making this letter public.[9]

Instead of boycotting the Franklin Furnace exhibition, mail artists plotted to remove the curator from her position as moderator of a mail art panel discussion presented by *Artists Talk on Art* at 22 Wooster St. Gallery in SoHo, New York City. In a prepared statement read by the panelists to Dr. Cohen, they removed her as moderator while making it clear she was welcome to remain on the panel for discussion. Rather than remain on the panel an outraged Dr. Cohen chose to leave. A recorded account of the opening statements that night follows:

> Dr. Ronny Cohen: There is no rule anywhere that every work has to be exhibited through the entire run of the show.... It was my original intention to have two rotating exhibitions of the

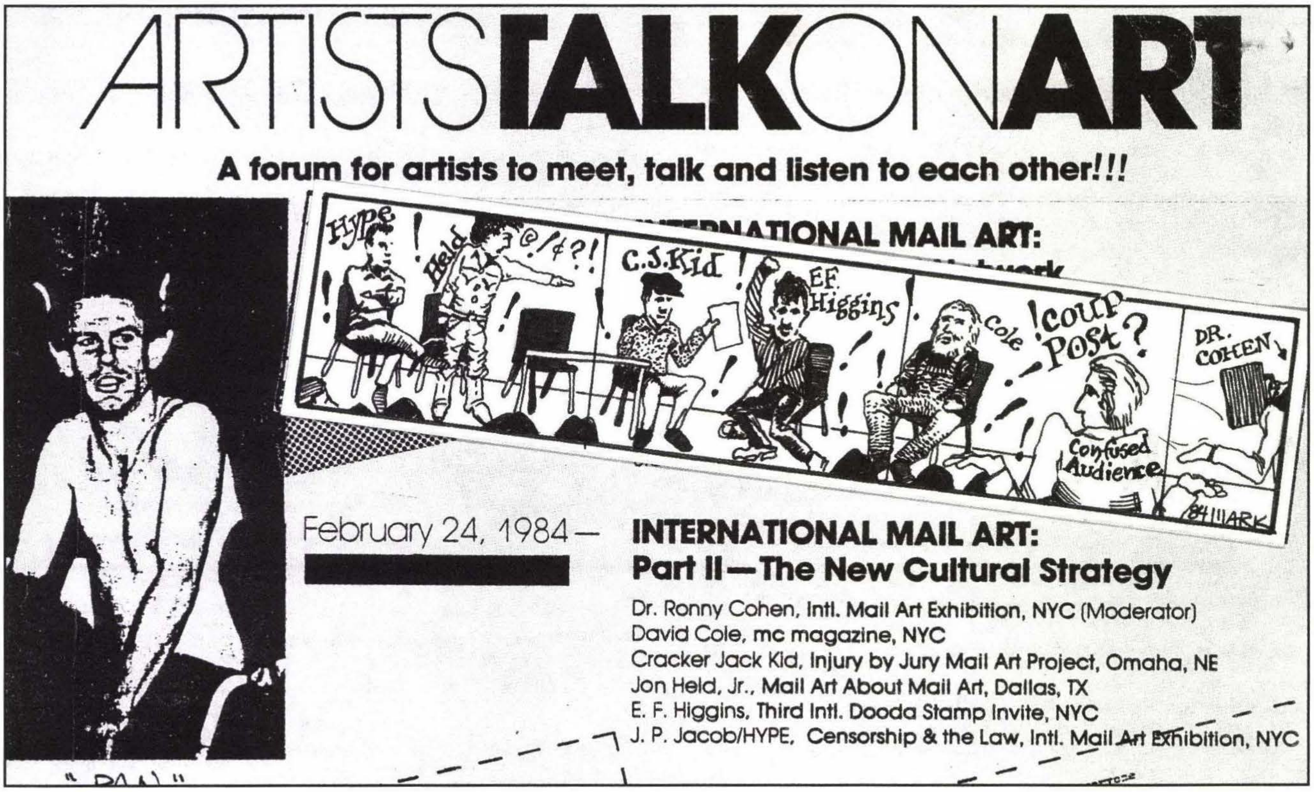


Figure 107. Mark Wamaling, Front page of *Newark Press.* U.S.A., 1984. Mail Art Zine. The Entartete Kunst issue of *Newark Press* provides a thorough account of the Franklin Furnace Mail Art Mêlée. Wamaling's eyewitness cartoon of the mail art panelists captures the confusion of the moment.

mail art material. Because of the "Open Letter" (by Carlo Pittore) that was addressed to me and sent around the country, we decided to speed up the process... We live in a real world. Mail artists, too, live in a real world. And in the real world there are no ideal conditions. You may like to have total control over your art, the display and exhibition of your art, but that, in the real world, is almost impossible.

John P. Jacob: I think that it's important to know, too, that mail art was not created for the real world, or the real world galleries. It was created by artists, for artists. And a lot of what we are here to say is that if a gallery wants to show mail art, and if you say, "everything shown," then you show it. There was plenty of room on the walls. There was plenty of room for more books. You show it. You do what you've said you're going to do... A gallery doesn't need to show it (mail art) if it doesn't want to abide by the standards that are already set.

Dr.Cohen: Well, you don't need to send in work if you feel that you must have total control...

John Jacob: But we didn't know.

Dr. Cohen: No, this is what I'm saying: you want total control so you have... what didn't you know? You were told that all works would be displayed, yes.

Carlo Pittore: We've been down to the Franklin Furnace every day asking that the work be put up. We went to opening night and we said, "Where is the work?" And you said, "I wanted to display the 'Art' in mail art.[10]

Ironically, the valuable topic of discussion scheduled for that night, "Mail Art: A New Cultural Strategy," was never addressed and the proceedings were diminished by insults, jeering, accusations and heated arguments. Again, the issue of quality mail art emerged as mail artists viewed a formal presentation at Franklin Furnace of historical mail art placed under glass. This contrasted starkly with mail art overflowing in stuffed boxes because there was no space for exhibition. Some mail artists felt Dr. Cohen was a

victim of circumstances, that she was caught between the enormous international response to her show and the limitations of space and staffing at Franklin Furnace. The bitter proceedings surrounding these events at Franklin Furnace may have been avoided had there been constructive communication between Dr. Cohen and the mail artists who felt victimized.

Bridging Distances

Networking calls for facilitation and cooperation with others, not domination. Still it is likely that ego conflict, misinformation, and misunderstanding will always arise in some form because these are human aspects of communication. At the Wooster St. Gallery panel discussion, David Cole explained, "The reason that somehow we can pass through the ego is because we're so far apart, and because we have the time lag involved in mailing it."[11] Argentine stamp artist, Edgardo Vigo, upon discussing loneliness, isolation and distance in mail art correspondence, stated:

> Well, I tell you that my best friends are far away from me, those who I probably will never meet I do not totally agree with those people I am in close contact with. With distance, communication is more sincere and remains intact for a long time.[12]

Distance is also about overcoming geographic isolation, or a preference to remain far from recognized centers of the art establishment. Carol Stetser, postmaster and mail artist in the Mohave Desert town of Oatman, Arizona thrives upon "life on the fringe." "Mail art's rightful place *is* life on the fringe."[13] Stetser believes mail art shrinks the world by bringing information, stimulation, friendship and hope that make life open and free.

New York mail and performance artist Mark Bloch has created Panscan, a computer teleconferencing network, to overcome distances with immediacy. He prefers fast-paced discussion with mail artists about important issues rather than "snail mail."

> Computer-based communication is more conversational. Discussions that take place through the mail are characterized by a time lapse in which to consider one's answer to responses and thus extend a over a long period of time. The subject at hand may resolve itself in an unplanned, undesirable way as the letters slowly criss-cross in the mails. Discussions may get derailed by letters that pass each other in the postal system, destroying the linear nature of the discussion.[14]

Artists corresponding in some closely-knit webs maintain a distance from other sensibilities out of personal preference. A faction of mail artists, for instance, believe the medium is getting too serious and that playfulness is being lost. These artists prefer creating visual rather than verbal dialogue. They question the need for questions, definitions, or written mail-art histories. Carol Stetser questions the motives behind what she perceives as "a sudden urge among mail artists to become historians."

> My beef is not with the dissemination of information or the compilation of archives, but with the historification of mail art... Is mail art being codified as His Story the way mainstream "art history" has been?... Those of us participating in the network know why we're doing it. We don't need to read a definition of mail art—we know what it is. We don't need to read about its aesthetics, the origin of its terminology, its future direction. As practitioners we are already engaged in its present and its future.[15]

But there are a growing number of mail artists who believe that the medium requires as serious full-time

involvement as any other form of art expression. Artist curator John P. Jacob in an editorial in *Posthype* stated that mail artists should raise the quality of mail art by demanding powerful, effective communication from others. Anything less is mere amusement:

> ...We must understand that only certain mail artists have been taken seriously because they have taken mail art seriously. They have used it as a part of the Idea of their Art, and have brought to it something important. In general, however, mail art has not been taken seriously because so few of the thousands who have participated have taken it seriously. They have filled the postal Network with the same ideas that fill the air waves, filling time and space with endless yakety yak.[16]

Too often, mail artists distance themselves by emphasizing differences in sensibilities such as serious versus playful mail art. Networking artists, however, acknowledge the "netplerking" of work and play. They defend individual freedom and fight censorship. Mail artist Sally Mericle, in a letter describing her New York City mail art exhibition, Is There No Justice, defends the right of free speech and dialogue in mail art:

> If one supports the cause of free speech and free expression—which has to be a *must* in the world of "art"—even the quirky "anything goes" world of mail art—then there can be *no censorship.* Censorship is an anathema to mail art, always has been, always will be—and in these days of prominent censorship of high art, I guess we have to be even more open about the unspoken, unwritten "rules of mail art."[17]

Does democracy exist in mail art? Are doors open to all or do active participants exclude newcomers that don't meet personal criteria? Libertarian mail artist Alex Cheek believes he has been ostracized by some because of his political views, "Several (mail artists) have actually written back just to say they will not respond to anything I send them. Once I received a postcard, without a return address, which simply said, "Get out of the network!"[18] Guy Bleus is an active Belgian mail artist who, like Alex Cheek and Sally Mericle, defends freedom of expression and the right to be misunderstood by others:

> If I like to think about the essence of mail art and/ or to give a lecture about it, no other mail artist can forbid me to do so. One of the basic principles of art and mail art is "freedom" and this implies many things, such as the right to be misunderstood. But if the principle of freedom disappears, then networking is a dead body.[19]

There are other characteristics of mail art that limit personal freedom. As mail artists are overwhelmed by quantities of mail, they base their responses on personal preferences, or by how much time, money or energy is available. When mail art networker Crackerjack Kid met John Cage at a show of Cage's handmade paper in Boston, Cage confided that he preferred mail art with personal correspondence. Cage also disliked all chain letters. Crackerjack Kid mailed out 1,134 pieces of mail art during 1992 with an average cost per envelope and parcel exceeding $1.00. When a year of postal expenses reaches into thousands of dollars, it is understandable that active mail artists would prefer a selective audience whose responses are valued. According to performance artist Andrej Tisma, there is a natural selection for quality in mail art:

> Authors of poor ideas, with faulty execution, and a weak potential of creative energy radiating from their work do not find any response from other participants in the mail art network. Their works remain unanswered, since in mail art nobody is under any obligation of answering, and they will find themselves excluded from the network after some time.[20]

Often distances serve to protect and insulate networks rather than open them. Distance is also created from mistrust and suspicion between one camp of artists and another.

Suspicion, gossip, rumors, jealousy, sexism, censorship by groups of purists, and spreading false information are as evident in the mail art world as in life itself. In such cases is it plausible to suspect that mail artists who fear others have nothing to fear but themselves?

Tourism: Traveling the Distance

Between panel discussions and visitations to the heavily criticized Franklin Furnace mail art exhibition, new ideas for resolving issues were being enthusiastically discussed at John P. Jacob and Carlo Pittore's Manhattan apartments. Foremost among these informal discussions was a mailed proposal, as set forth by Harley of Oberlin, Ohio,[21] to organize the First International Mail Art Congress where artists could meet and create together. Harley's proposal established the first substantial working plan for mail art congressing. There were discussion panels, exhibitions, mail art archival displays, and the presentation of papers to be published as documentation of the mail art congress. Open to public interaction, the diverse discussions were to cover "...the relationship of mail art to politics, the art establishment, the archive, the commercial art world and the history of art."

Swiss contextual artist Hans Ruedi Fricker, touring New York City during the mail art gatherings, spoke with the author about Harley's proposal and about the interest and feasibility of organizing mail art congresses. Eighteen months later, Fricker collaborated with Swiss mail artist Günther Ruch in orchestrating informal congress meetings with all mail artists who chose to meet, discuss or create mail art. Ruch, in the Jan/Feb. 1983 issue of *Clinch,* published a political collage of his fictitious First International Mail-Art Congress 82, evidence of an early interest in mail art congressing. Indeed, Ruch among other networkers had been a strong advocate of networking sensibilities in the early 1980s and many of his networking ideas became points of discussion at the 1986 mail art congresses.

> Is there a common base between different mail artists? If there is, how can one describe this base? What is the difference between mail art and networking? What can we do with the overflow of daily mail?...What can we do with our archives? What's wrong with interpretations of mail art coming from outside the network?[22]

While the mail art congresses were widespread (over eighty worldwide) not all mail artists participated. Some felt that H.R. Fricker's "tourism" theme was too centralized a concept, even though (Fig. 108) the international congresses were touted as being decentralized. Tourism involves cashing in postage stamps for travel tickets—to meet, perform, or discuss issues. There were mail artists who wanted to attend congresses but couldn't because they hadn't time or money to attend. Others felt the congresses were more concerned about performances than networking strategies and new visions. Finally, meeting other mail artists in person somehow detracted from the mysterious and chance nature of mail art exchange. Belgian mail artist Guy Bleus viewed tourism as compromising democratic ideals in mail art:

> Tourism is not a satisfying substitute for mail art. It does not entirely respect its democratic principles. For instance: I can send a letter to Japan, Brazil or Australia for a few dollars or less, but I can't visit Cohen, Duch or Tane without an expensive travel ticket. ...I don't think I'll ever be a good tourist. I actually hate travelling.[23]

When H.R. Fricker proposed another congress year for 1992, stamp artist and networker Crackerjack Kid mailed

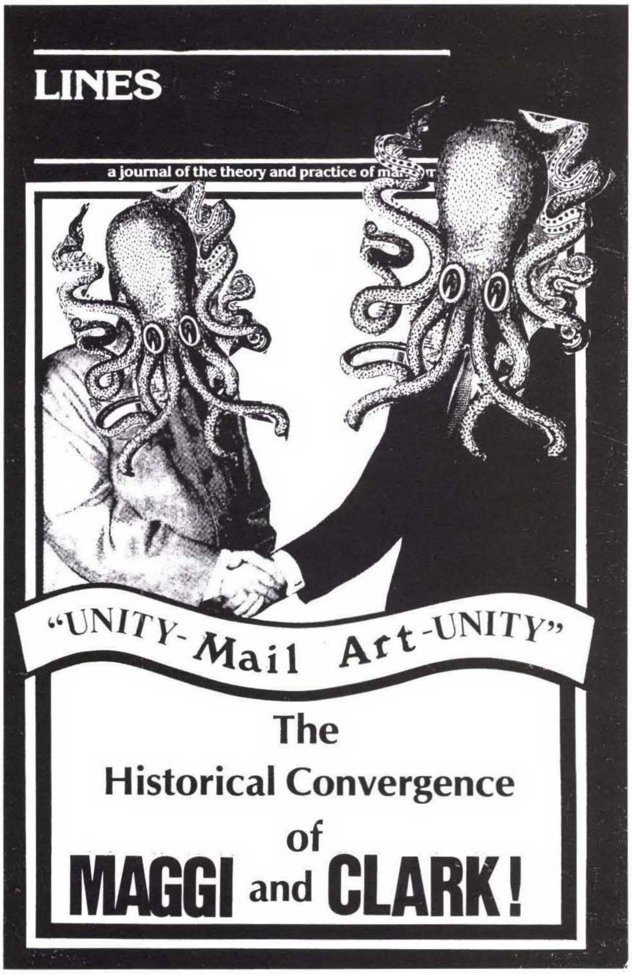


Figure 108. Allan Clark, *The Historical Convergence of Maggi and Clark!*, Canada, 1992. Collage.

flyers throughout the network calling for a meta-networker congress (Metanet). He created the neologism "netlink" and advocated congresses where mail artists could choose between meeting spirit-to-spirit or in flesh. The Kid distributed hundreds of rubber stamps with the declaration, "I meta-networker in spirit" and mailed a persuasive challenge to "congress in spirit."

> We, the invisible congress of ethereal netshakers, proclaim an ethereal open metanet; a harmonic divergence for those who can and can't meet in person. Let us gather and vibe in spirit on the vernal equinox, March 20, 1992. Perform alone or together, record chants, videotape all things and no things, net dance, hop, roll, jump, turn around, séance, post poems, read palms, teleconference or telepathy, mind to mind, spirit to spirit, net-feast and net-fast, gather, set the last network supper, say a prayer, post a vision and quest, be a guest in spirit. Meta-spirit! Meta-post! Meta-network in 1992![24]

Corresponding Worlds

Whether by mail art or networker congresses, private exchange by post or public mail art exhibitions, sensibilities among networkers create corresponding worlds. Today, twenty-five years after visionary poet Robert Filliou coined "eternal network," mail art has evolved into a networker's phenomenon. Clearly, a tradition of ethics, values, dialogue and creative interaction is continually evolving through networking channels. We have seen that this doesn't mean there isn't conflict among mail art families. In any thriving, global community, there are pockets of opposing attitudes from which vital debate is born. Rubber stamp artist and feminist Leavenworth Jackson believes that healing must occur within the network framework and should be based on at least two types of awareness:

> One is a grounding awareness of how images of women are currently being treated or used (both within and without mail art) and what the effects of this treatment or use are. For men, this may call into question a whole range of attitudes towards 'the other,' be it the other sex, other races, other species or other manifestations of being. For women, this may cause issues of self esteem to unfold, it may involve questioning of culturally imposed hierarchies.
>
> The other area of awareness is the one you are making a valiant effort at bringing to light. And that is the creative vision, prayer, dream or parable that either leaps ahead of current confusions and difficulties or maybe reaches back historically (as in the re-emergence of the goddess tradition) into a vision of a more truthful, harmonious and satisfying way of being.[25]

Sharing creative information requires trusting and respecting equal authority. Daniel Plunkett, Texas mail

artist and editor of *ND*, describes the importance of ethics based on trust: "It (mail art) is a process that has re-established ethics of trust, honesty and creativity that have been killed or exploited in 'alternative' trendy art spaces and galleries. With the mails you get the guts, the unpolished, the process and the ideas that inspire other ideas."[26]

Networking exchange calls mail artists to a sense of purpose, inter-relatedness, and cooperation. It involves a shift from patriarchal, hierarchical, anthropocentric thinking to a worldview vision. The networking process is like a continuous communications loop between individuals in search of visual and verbal dialogue. Visual poet David Cole views the process as governed by chance and by necessity; "This knowing way of art is looping round and round, and each sees oneself reappearing."[27] In the reappearing there is a metamorphosis of "I" manifested in "We." Out of this transition all distances dissolve and correspondence transports us to corresponding worlds.

* * * * * *

1. Thomas Albright, "New Art School: Correspondence," *Rolling Stone Magazine*, April 13, 1972, 32, and April 27, 1972, 28, 29.
2. Albright, "New Art School: Correspondence," *Rolling Stone Magazine*, April 13, 1972, 32.
3. Ibid.
4. Anna Banana, "Mail Art Canada," in Michael Crane and Mary Stofflet, eds., *Correspondence Art*, San Francisco: Contemporary Art Press, 1984, 252.
5. *VILE* was published between 1974 and 1980, concluding in 1983 with the book, *About VILE*. "*VILE*'s mandate was to reflect the activity of the mail art network." Anna Banana in a letter to the author, November, 1990.
6. Ken Friedman, in a letter to the author, February 14, 1991, 7.
7. Albright, 32.
8. Harley, "Statement by the Guest Curator: A Labor of Love," *Corresponding Worlds — Artists' Stamps*, Allen Memorial Art Museum: Oberlin, Ohio, 1987.
9. Carlo Pittore, "An Open Letter to Dr. Ronny Cohen," in Daniel Plunkett, ed., *ND Magazine*, June/July 1984, 23.
10. John P. Jacob, "Artists Talk On Art: Mail Art Panel Two, The New Cultural Strategy," *Posthype*, III: 1, 30.
11. John P. Jacob, 33.
12. Edgardo-Antonio Vigo, "Excerpt from Personal Correspondence by Edgardo-Antonio Vigo, Argentina," in Harley Francis, ed., Corresponding Worlds—Artists' Stamps, Allen Memorial Art Museum: Oberlin, Ohio, 1987, 12.
13. Carol Stetser in a letter to the author, April 30, 1991.
14. Mark Bloch, "Teleconferencing and Mail Art: Networks in Need of Each Other," an unpublished essay mailed to the author, April 1991, 1.
15. Carol Stetser letter.
16. John P. Jacob, "Editorial," *Posthype*, II: 3, 1983.
17. Sally Mericle in a letter to the author, September 25, 1990.
18. Alex Cheek in a letter to the author dated May 1991.
19. Guy Bleus in a letter to the author dated May 16, 1991.
20. Andrej Tisma, "Aspects of Mail-Art: The Spirit of Democracy," *Privatni Zivot* catalog, 1986, 6.
21. Harley's 1982 invitation to the First International Mail Art Congress was mailed extensively throughout the international mail art network and was scheduled to be held April 1–10, 1983 at the Image Resource Center, Cleveland, Ohio. Although the congress never materialized, Harley's September 28–November 16, 1981 European trip was sponsored by Cleveland's Image Resource Center expressly to promote mail art congressing. Even before the 1981 European trip, Harley established influential contacts in which the First International Mail Art Congress was discussed and supported by Jean Brown, Robin Crozier, Guy Schraenen, Marisa Da Riz and many others. His 1981 European tour and 1982 mail art congress invitation popularized and firmly established the international appeal for a mail art congress, thereby setting the tone for dialogue that was to follow from 1982 to 1984: "After a quarter-century of intense activity, it is an opportune time to attempt a thorough and organized examination of the diverse content and substantial influence of Mail Art. The convening of the First International Mail Art Congress in Cleveland will provide a much-needed focus for stimulating contact and exchange between Mail Artists from all over the world." Harley, *First International Mail Art Congress Invitation*.
22. Günther Ruch, "Introductory Statement," *Clinch Magazine*, No. 8, September 1986, Geneve-Peney: Switzerland, 4.
23. Guy Bleus, "Black Yellow Red Reflections About the 30.08.86 Mail Art Congress in Rainy Belgium," in Günther Ruch, ed., *Clinch Magazine*, No. 8, September 1986, Geneve-Peney: Switzerland, 8.
24. Crackerjack Kid, "Netshaker Harmonic Convergence," pamphlet invitation, May 1991.
25. Leavenworth Jackson in a letter to the author dated November 6, 1990.
26. Daniel Plunkett in a letter to the author dated April 26, 1991.
27. David Cole in a letter to the author dated May 7, 1991.



Figure 109. Crackerjack Kid, *World-Wide Decentralized Networker Congress Logo*, U.S.A. 1992. Computer Graphic.



Figure 110. Tom Cassidy, a.k.a. Musicmaster, *Mail Art City*, U.S.A., 1991. Collage.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 30
MAIL ART, LIBRARIANS, AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Chris Dodge and Jan DeSirey

"What is the social responsibility of the artist? Please comment for a 'letter opening performance' by John Held, Jr." That rubber stamped message was a call for mail artists to participate in Held's performance at the 1990 membership meeting of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association. Unfortunately, the responses were not encouraging[1] The "answers" ranged from the disingenuous ("I give up") to the absurd ("What blunder eaten before the TV news, the globe shaped like a stick?..."), from the self-centered and sexist[2] ("To be honest to himself") to the egotistical ("To have... an emotion"), and from those admittedly ignorant ("What do I know about it"?) to those analytical about their ignorance ("My life stems from a passion to create, not from a knowledge of responsibilities"). How was it that only a few of the more than forty-five respondents even hinted about social consciousness? How was it that more of them focused on personal freedom as the supreme value, some even confusing the distinction between artistic freedom and social responsibility entirely?

Is there a mail art ivory tower, or what? Has the mail art network become complacent and self-congratulatory? Mark Bloch, for one, believes so, and cites its insular nature:

> Everyone is happy that messages are being sent and received and no one is reading and interpreting the messages... We have grown comatose... Perhaps because they are all media and no content... we end up with... stuff in the mail that isn't even worth interpreting.[3]

Bloch holds that it is often only when mail art connects with "the larger world" that the messages transcend the medium, and writes, "Those of us who believe in our right to play in our own way must put away our toys for a while and instead work at sending meaningful messages that will be understood and have impact."

Some mail artists, it should be emphasized, have operated that way all along. The resume of Uruguayan mail artist, Clemente Padin, for example, includes entries such as "The Artist is at the Service of the Community," a 1975 project which included, along with symposia on topics like the role of the artist, activities such as street-sweeping and school-painting. There is Michael Duquette, whose mail art endeavors have frequently been part and parcel of his work within the Canadian labor movement.[4] (Fig. 111) California poet Carol Schneck creates mailings that focus on AIDS education and related issues. All are mail art networkers who function as if justice, not freedom, were the paramount good. Held's "Social Responsibility" call brought some of this attitude to light, but Carol Schneck noted, "The average artist has all the social responsibility of the average newt," while Italian mail artist Ruggero Maggi spoke glowingly of "a human network in the sign of peace and solidarity." California stamp artist Harley was one of few who was more radical and action oriented:

> In the West the artist can do everything and it means nothing. In the East the artist can do nothing and it means everything. The social responsibility of the artist is to survive and to continue to nibble away at society's thick hide with love and sharp teeth.

While some mail art projects have focused on issues of social justice (e.g., Reima Makinen's 1989 "Artists Against

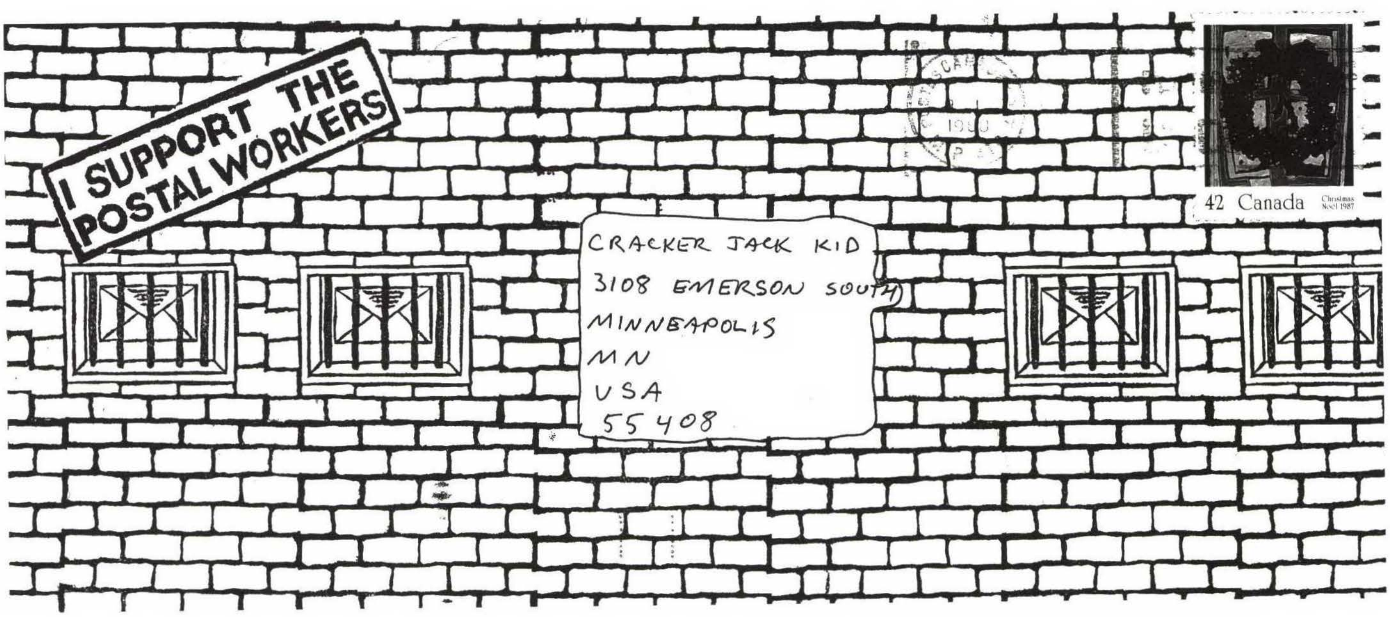


Figure 111. Michael Duquette, *I Support the Postal Workers*, Canada, 1988. Rubber Stamped Envelope.

Apartheid" and Ayah Okwabi's 1987 "Food for the Hungry"), the mail artists who have truly "sharp teeth" are the ones who are building bridges—between Ruggero Maggi's network of international friendship and the rest of the world that doesn't know mail art from shinola. Sacred Run (p. 103 and p. 131), a case in point, found a group of Japanese mail artists joining with "outsiders" like Native American activist Dennis Banks for a cultural exchange tour across Europe.[5] Another example, The 1990 International Shadows Project, featured work by peace activist Daniel Berrigan and Native American poet and editor Joseph Bruchac, names not usually noted in mail art circles.[6] There are individuals like Ron Sakolsky who have fostered a network that somehow connects mail artists, university students, community radio listeners and librarians, to name just a few, around issues like the 1992 Christopher Columbus Quincentennial. It's this kind of issue-oriented networking that interests us as library workers.

Are there librarians working in and around the mail art network? Yes, and contentious ones at that. While librarian John Held, Jr. is the mail art bibliographer extraordinaire, a number of network-connected library workers in Minnesota have been busy for some years, organizing everything from programs ("The Columbus Quincentennial: Is there anything to celebrate?"[7]) to resolutions against U.S. military intervention in Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf. Members of the Minnesota Library Association's Social Responsibilities Round Table (MSRRT) understand that librarianship is a contact sport. They point out that librarians are called—in the admittedly small print of the American Library Association Policy Manual—to be "proactive professionals" who contribute to "ameliorating or solving the critical problems of society." Many librarians go about their work in the same frame of mind as that of the most engaging mail artists, with the spirit of sharing ever present.

The sharing in much of 1990 focused on efforts to prevent war in the Persian Gulf. A mass mailing sent from Minnesota in December 1990, for example, collated materials received from a dozen or more peace-seeking individuals and organizations, targeting activists in the

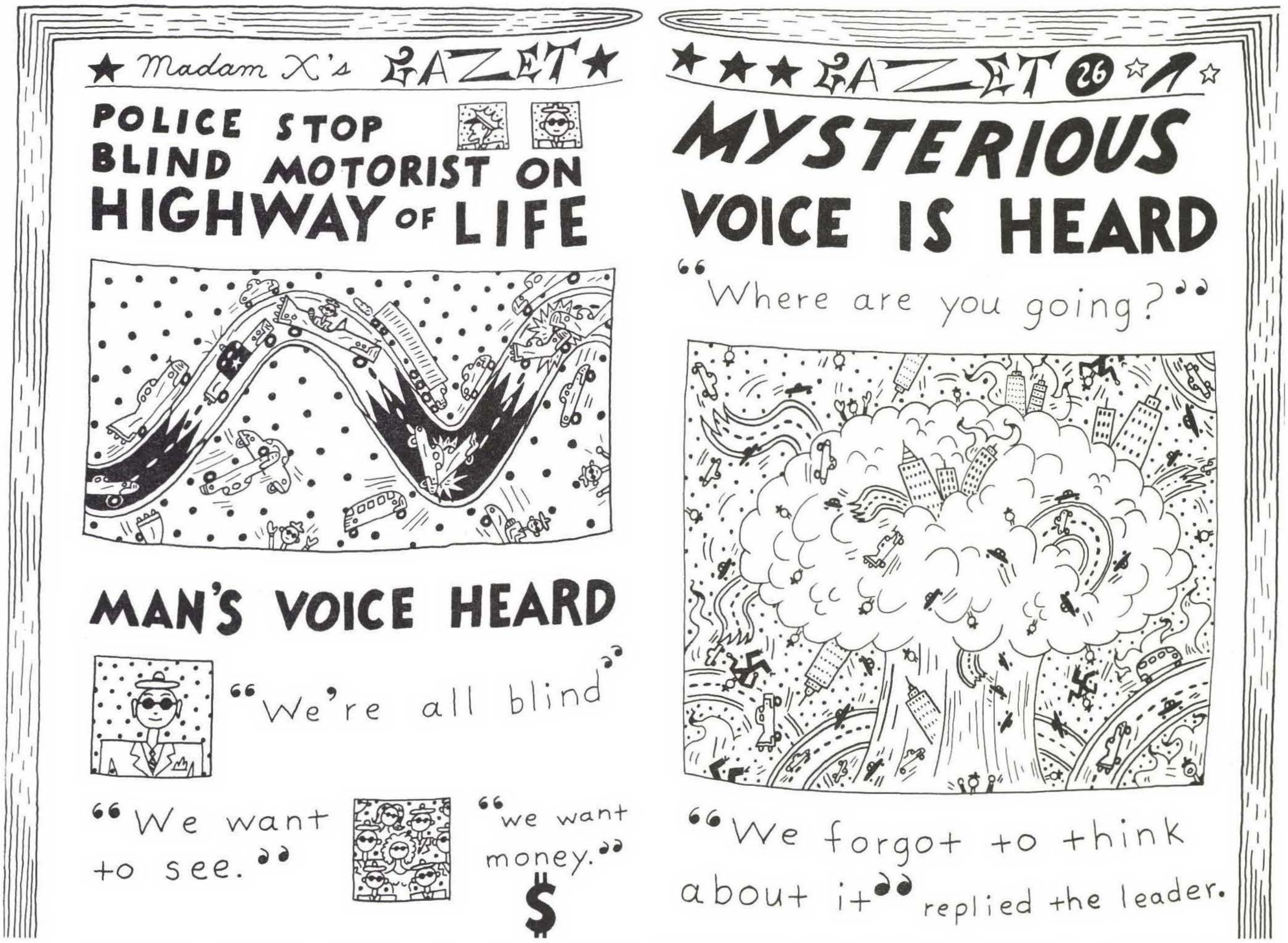


Figure 112. Madam X, *Madam X's Gazet, Issue No. 26*, U.S.A., 1988. Mail Art Zine. In the mailstream since 1975 *Madam X's Gazet* remains one of mail art's most enduring, laconic "zen-zines." Often merely a postcard, the *Gazet* revels in cosmic humor of mankind amok.

American Library Association. The care packages included everything from a newspaper column by outspoken West Virginia librarian Yvonne Farley[8] to a statement by the Minnesota House Progressive Legislators' Study Group passed along by a Palestinian-American librarian colleague. And from a critique of the United States Institute of Peace[9] to material provided by the Military Families Support Network that suggested sending large plastic garbage bags to President Bush "to symbolize the body bags being sent to the Persian Gulf." Not to mention photocopies of pertinent articles from publications like *Extra!* and *Midwest Pacifist Commentator* that MSRRT received on an exchange basis.[10]

Why do librarians and mail artists create socially engaging activities? There can be no true interconnection in the world as long as injustice exists. As long as one person goes hungry. As long as one person goes without a home. As long as one child dies of malnutrition. As long as one person is mistreated.

How do proactive librarians and mail artists communicate? Through the mail. Through collaborative writing. Through engendering contacts with interested members of the media. By exchanging publications. By attending community meetings on issues like police accountability and the hazards of garbage burning. By giving out names, addresses and phone numbers freely and taking the same in return. By telephone. By fax. By reading and sharing publications like *Z Magazine* and *Factsheet Five.*[11] By joining and participating in organizations like Women Against Military Madness. By marching against

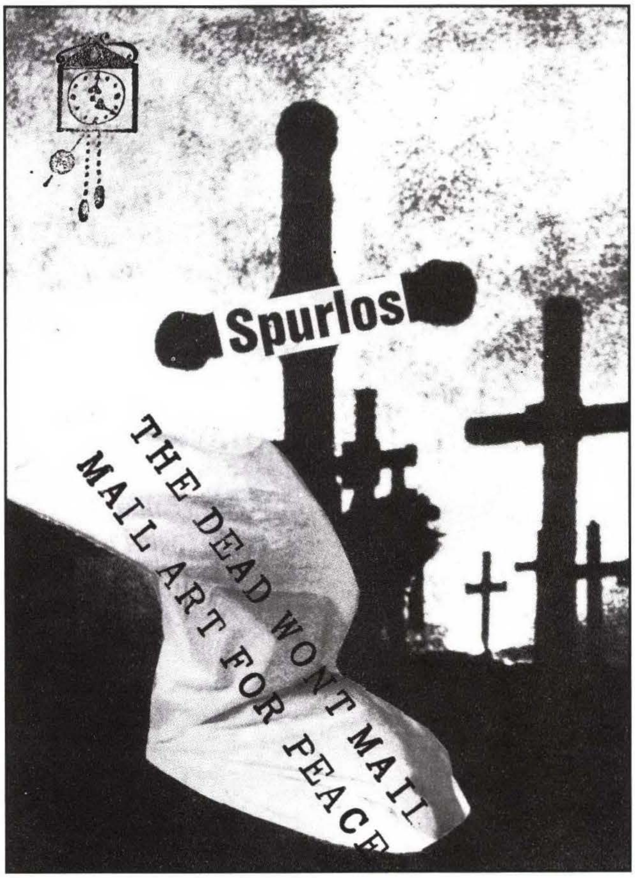


Figure 113. Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, *The Dead Won't Mail Art for Peace*, Germany, 1988. Postcard.

military interventions, invasions, and wars by any name. By speaking out to family and friends. By being fearless. By being uncool. By supporting local independent bookstores. By paying attention to boycott and petition campaigns. By shopping at co-ops. By producing local cable television programs. By writing letters and reviews. By joining the efforts of other activists. By conducting workplace drives.

Only by becoming involved in a world larger than mail art and bigger than libraries can we challenge the status quo effectively. How many librarians or mail artists participated in the 1990 No Blood for Oil campaign that transformed empty film canisters into mailable "oil drums" destined for elected officials as a protest against U.S. military action in the Persian Gulf?[12] And how many of them mailed used styrofoam cartons back to McDonald's corporate headquarters in the "McToxics" campaign generated by Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes?[13] Mail artists and librarians alike might do well to realize their common ground, and to ask not, "Is my work harming anyone?" but rather, "What is my work doing to make the world a livable place?" And to practice networking as if community really mattered... with love and sharp teeth.

* * * * * *

1. John Held, Jr., "The social responsibility of the artist is to comment pleasingly" is what I interpret to be the title of John Held's documentation booklet. The source of this quote is Ray Johnson who wrote Held, "Dear Mr. Help, The social responsibility of the artist is to comment pleasingly." Due in large part to perceived audience inattention, Held limited himself to opening less than half the mail he had received on the theme, concentrating, instead, on documenting the piece in writing.
2. What percentage of mail artists are white and male, anyway?
3. Mark Bloch, "How much work could a network net if a network could net work?" *Factsheet Five,* No. 37, pp. 93–95.
4. Michael Duquette is active with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.
5. The artists, Shozo Shimamoto, Ryosuke Cohen, Mayumi Handa, and Shizue Kinami, had offers of logistical help not only from dozens of fellow networkers, but also from the likes of the Soviet Association of International Youth Initiatives.
6. "The International Shadows Project, Milwaukee, 1990." Catalogue published by Woodland Book Center, 720 E. Locust St., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202.
7. Minnesota Library Association Annual Conference, November 7, 1990, St. Cloud, Minnesota. The program, which featured four community activists talking about countering the Columbus-as-hero myth, would—like most of MSRRT's work—not have been possible without the support of an extensive network of friends and colleagues. They provided books, articles, names and phone numbers, and artwork, and a host of other pertinent material, most arriving via the mail.
8. Yvonne Farley, "Nothing like war to hide problems," *Charleston Gazette*, November 20, 1990, p. 4A.
9. A more accurate appellation for that institution would be The United States Institute of Peace and/or Basic American Interests.
10. *Extra!*, 175 Fifth Ave., Suite 2245, New York New York 10010, (212) 633-6700; *Midwest Pacifist Commentator*, 5729 S. Dorchester, Chicago, Illinois 60637, (312) 324-0654.
11. *Z Magazine*, 116 St. Botolph St., Boston, Massachusetts 02115-9979, (617) 787-4531; *Factsheet Five*, PO Box 170099, San Francisco, CA 94117-0099.
12. Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, New York 10960, (914) 358-4601.
13. CCHW, PO Box 926, Arlington, Virginia 22216, (703) 276-7070.



Figure 114. Crackerjack Kid a.k.a. Chuck Welch, *Boycott Exxon*, U.S.A., 1989. Artists' Stamps. The stampsheets appeared in North American newspapers such as *The Toronto Star* and *The Washington Post.* An Exxon stockholder who acquired the stampsheets reported that he placed the stamps on his cancelled stock certificates and mailed them to Exxon. Stamps were covertly placed on Exxon products and gas pumps.



Figure 115. Clemente Padin, *Uruguay* . 1975. Artists' Stamps. Padin's objective was to "denounce the inhuman and brutal repression of the facist government, 1975." Other stampsheets from the same period denounce transnational enterprises and state-run institutions such as the CIA.

CHAPTER 31
THE OPTIONS OF MAIL ART

Clemente Padin

I. Biographical Background

My experiences in mail art date from approximately 1967, when Edgardo Antonio Vigo, Guillermo Deisler, Damaso Ogas and I interchanged our respective publications: *Diagonal Cero (Diagonal Zero), Ediciones Mimbre (Osier Editions), La Pata de Palo (Leg of Wood)* and *Los Huevos del Plata (The Eggs of Silver)*. From this list of publications we later assembled the testimony of our propositions.

I officially began creating mail art in 1969 when the Uruguayan magazine *OVUM 10* published my postcards and visual poems. At this time there were similar sentiments actualized by Lilian Porter and Luis Camnitzer at the Institute DiTella in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In 1974, during the Uruguayan military dictatorship, I organized the first Latinoamerican Mail Art exposition at Galeria U. in Montevideo, Uruguay. My edition of apocryphal mail art stamps denounced the dictatorial regime for its brutal suppression of Uruguayan human rights and this eventually led to my imprisonment from August, 1977 to November, 1979. But in October 1983, I resumed my artistic activities with the *1st of May* exhibition at AEBU, the Association of Banking Employees of Uruguay. Thereafter, I proposed and organized the Latin American and Caribbean Association of Mail Artists, which was formed August 31, 1984, in Rosario, Argentina. Since then, I have participated in hundreds of mail art exhibitions throughout the world with combinations of my poetry, performance and videoart.

II. My Attraction to Mail Art

My attraction to mail art was the responsive, genuine nature of communication exchanges. Mail art is an artistic school without any "isms." As such, any "student" can enter this "school" and participate by using a diversity of new techniques or media for creating artwork in all disciplines. In this non-commercial, non-consumer domain, mail art has endured and remained a viable force for nearly thirty years.

Originality in mail art stems from the revolutionary communication of people through the mail. This and other characteristics of mail art are essential if we are to understand appropriate concepts. Mail art emphasizes the importance of communication as process rather than communication as a mercantile product subject to the laws of the marketplace. Mail artworks are not made for the art market to be consumed; rather, they are products of communication. The aesthetic value of mail art lies in the communicative effectiveness of transmitted ideas. Yet the cultural regime dictates in an oppressive system where certain privileged beings are "allowed," through divine mandate, to produce art. Mail artists should question this form of false cultural dialectic.

Sometimes the images and works that mail artists produce are created to please critics. The cultural regime is satisfied when artists create images and works that build an ideal world without contradictions and without wounds. This only succeeds in placing society under a blanket, which hides art in a false reality without purpose or function.

Ideological hegemony in society defines priorities of what is "beautiful" and what is not, that which is "art" and that which is not. Given free option to communicative proposals, the viewer's rights and those of everybody else are affirmed in the decision-making process. Mail art and other conceptual disciplines permit the spectator to have direct interaction with artwork according to that which has living value for one's self. Herein lies the propitiation of consummate creative activities that are applicable to every individual case.

Avoiding the active approval of art by ideologies that seek only to maintain hegemony is precisely what has made mail art a true democratic art with a viable ethic. We know that the art establishment has functioned for its own ends and is a system in which human values and one's own breath of air is paid for at a price.

III. The Ideological Character of Mail Art Communication

Mail art is art, and its object is a product of human work that reflects social relations. As a product of communication, mail art is an inseparable part of social production, and it is from this social milieu that mail artists use whatever media are of useful value. Just as important, within the network of mail artists are interchanges of ideas, which are important factors for the production of mail art objects.

In whatever product of communication that I choose to transmit there are the characteristics of relationships between society and me. Of course, this includes the antagonisms and contradictions that these relationships present. Mail art reflects these relationships and reproduces the ideology of the social or political reality. The political sense of art is inseparable from its artistic sense. Art is revealed as a subliminal form of social conscience, an instrument of knowledge whose function is auxiliary to that same society. Art is an instrument of change and transformation.

The ideological mechanisms of cultural control thrive in societies that favor a hegemonic system. No wonder that mail art, intended as a full expression of humanity, is distorted to the point that it can only be spoken of as an a historical or autonomous discourse, like an entity floating in space. Mail art is taken out of the world and is alienated from itself and from the social reality that it generates through certain media. It is necessary that we recover mail art from these tendencies and return it to its communicative efficacy.

Art that is outside a reflection of the social or economic conditions of society is exclusive. It is impossible to reduce the artistic to the political or to the social or vice versa, but the artists, only by reducing the concept of reality, can pretend to try in each level separately.

In conclusion, there are several options that mail artists can choose from:

- Mail artists can opt for social values already in existence or they can change the codes of social communication.
- Mail artists can qualify or try to measure the different mechanisms of control within the system, or try a new form of representation that will enable artists to question all established knowledge.
- Mail artists can reproduce work only for the art market that includes all work that is permissible, or propose works and texts that question the aesthetic, social and political status.
- Mail artists can resign their social responsibility by "l'art pour l'art" or...

* * * * * *

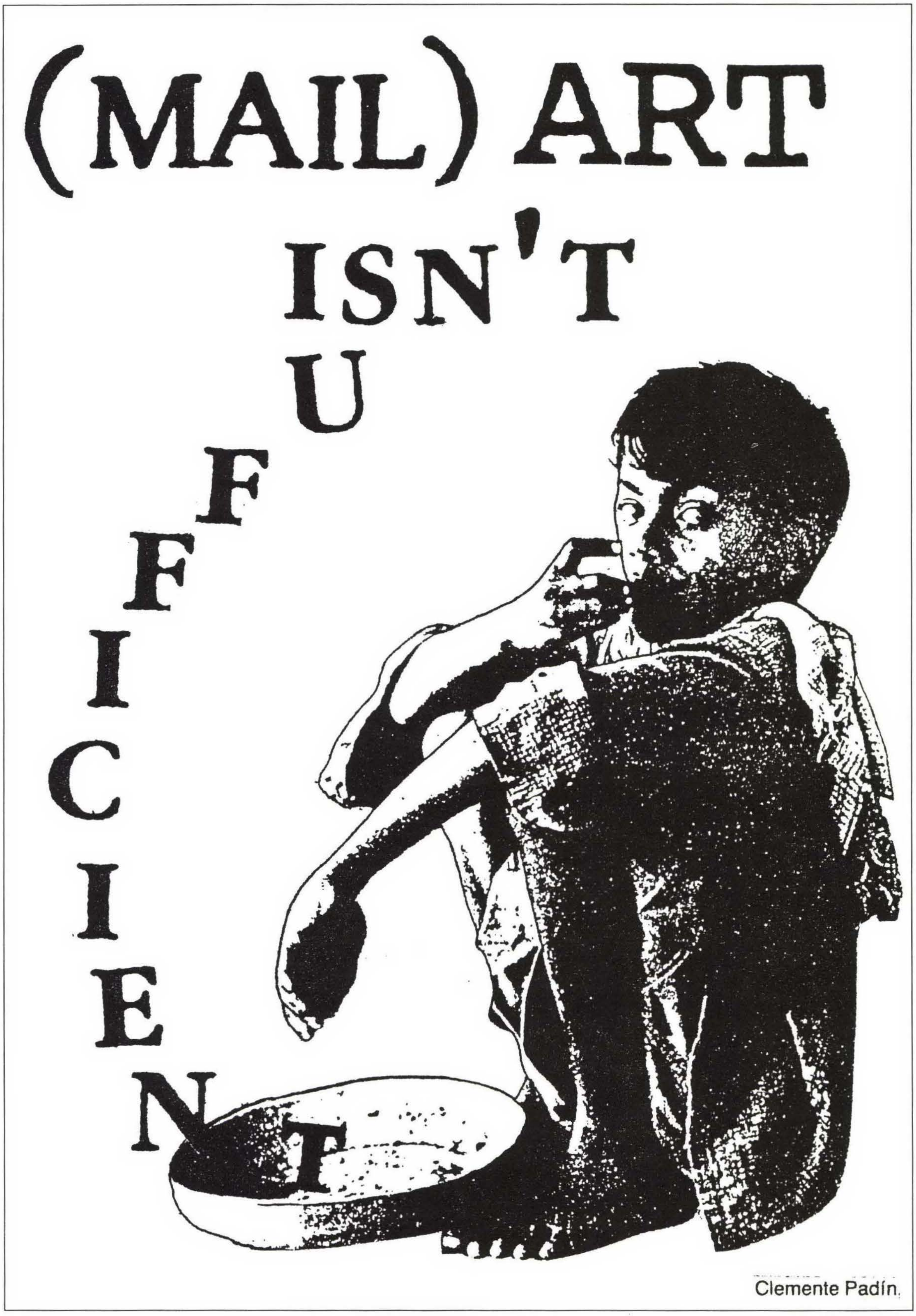


Figure 116. Clemente Padin. *(Mail) Art Isn't Sufficient*, Uruguay, 1990. Postcard.

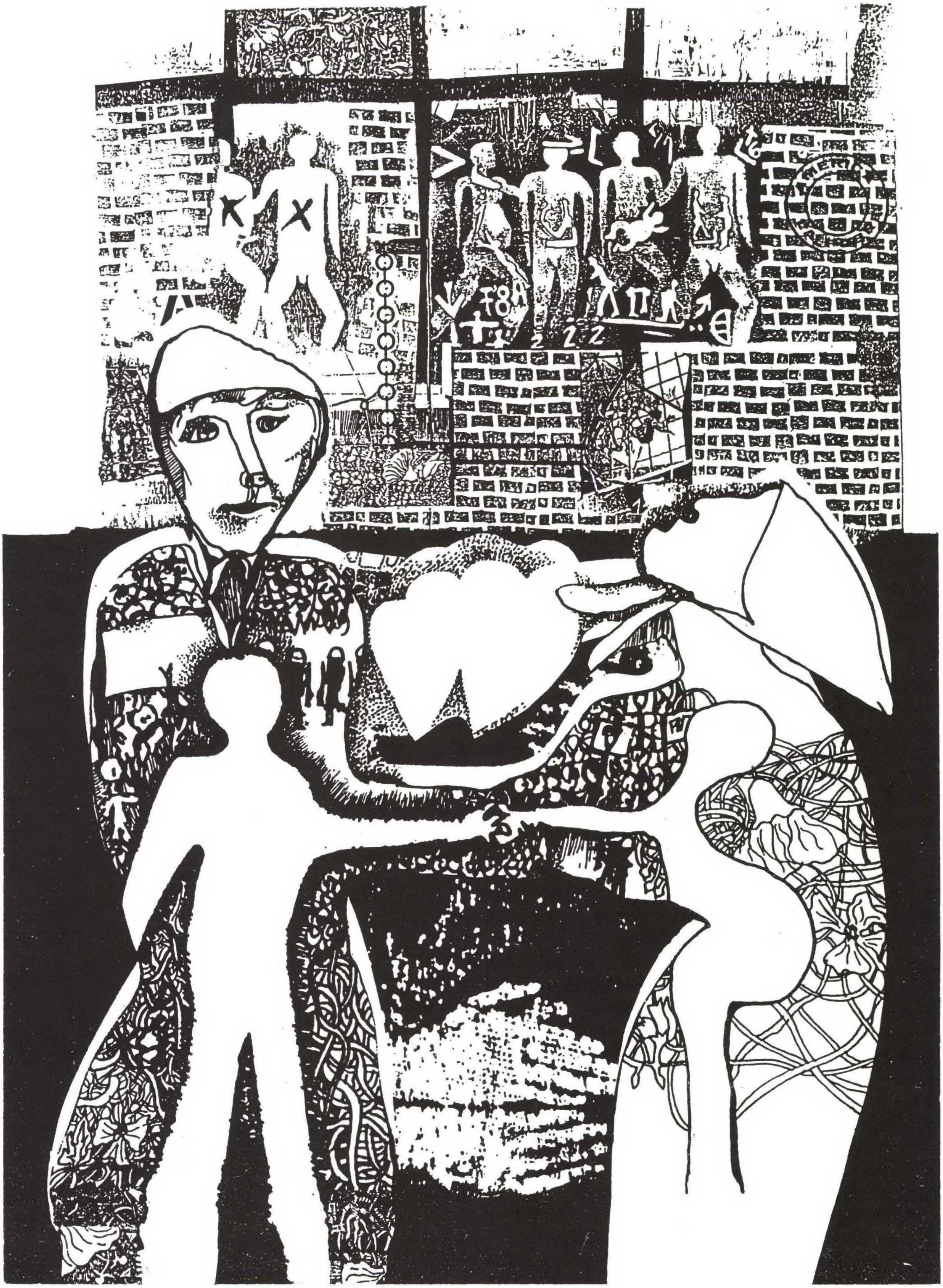


Figure 117. Graciela Gutiérrez Marx and Martin Raul Eckmeyer, *They Are Still Alive*, Argentina, 1988. Print.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 32

A FOLK ART WITHOUT ARTISTS

Graciela Gutiérrez Marx

"We must have a folk art without artists!" This controversial slogan, for which no solution has been found, is but a gesture I'm using to share some critical thinking regarding a very delicate situation: that of the South and Central American artist.

I despise theories, logical and rational foundations, test-tube analysis and aesthetic considerations. I only want to talk about a *necessity* as I understand it. Together, with many others, we must work urgently before the political space given to us in favor of freedom of expression is taken away. We must work before expressive illiteracy (by genesis or by disuse) continues to harm the creative possibilities of entire communities that have survived the social, economical and cultural depredation of the powerful—those who silence and sterilize us in our most everyday expressions through a pasteurization process of mass media communication.

I feel, as does Italian mail artist Bruno Talpo, that the best work of Latin American art is the work of survival. That as human beings, more than artists, we are trying to deliver a final message of *necessity.* We could speak of art as a new project of man (and consequently as a social model) that becomes credible and human in its struggle. To live is to be in contact with life. To create life and transform it into reality is much more important than simply giving form to new or old objects of art that indefectibly fall on a buying or selling market. The practice of aesthetic or historical criticism won't be sufficient to incarnate our slaughtered peoples. We must abandon privileged positions and assume consciousness and commitment to firm, revolutionary, almost mystic positions.

"To live—that is to say, to maintain oneself with life," as stated by Bertold Brecht, "has become an entire art... Who feels like pondering how to maintain art with life?" The very sentence stated here seems cynical in our present circumstances. This is how goodwill and solid spirit is expressed by one European, who, like those of his geography, have difficulty understanding our struggles. Perhaps our hope, my own hope is centered in a heartbeat that's barely audible. What we feel, I feel, is taking form here and in other places on this planet is more than building monuments made of noble materials or super-specialized universities. We choose, I choose, the modesty of a collective labor with equal rights for all men and women that populate these lands. I think of Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador... the Chile of Chicho Allende, the Brazil of Paulo Freire and the so many "olden days" or "future days" of our many ambushed nations. I think of Ivan Illich.

The creative act is by necessity a dialogue, a shared conversation created by the people... like a spontaneous birth, often painful and symbolic. It is like the paper doves made and thrown away by political prisoners, or the silhouettes of life painted by hundreds in our streets, that make the "present-absence" of our "missing" loved ones known to all. The creative act is the rumbling of a riot that reveals the intimate and the intimately lived. Yet creation is also present in the manipulation of tools, simply handled by innocent hands. This can be found in the corners of the underdeveloped nations of our world.

We must rescue the domestic and manual poetry of the American man and woman that has yet to be domesticated by technology; the women who knead dough by hand or sew with small and simple needle and thread; the women who wash their clothes with a scrub-board and a bar of soap. This too is ecology.

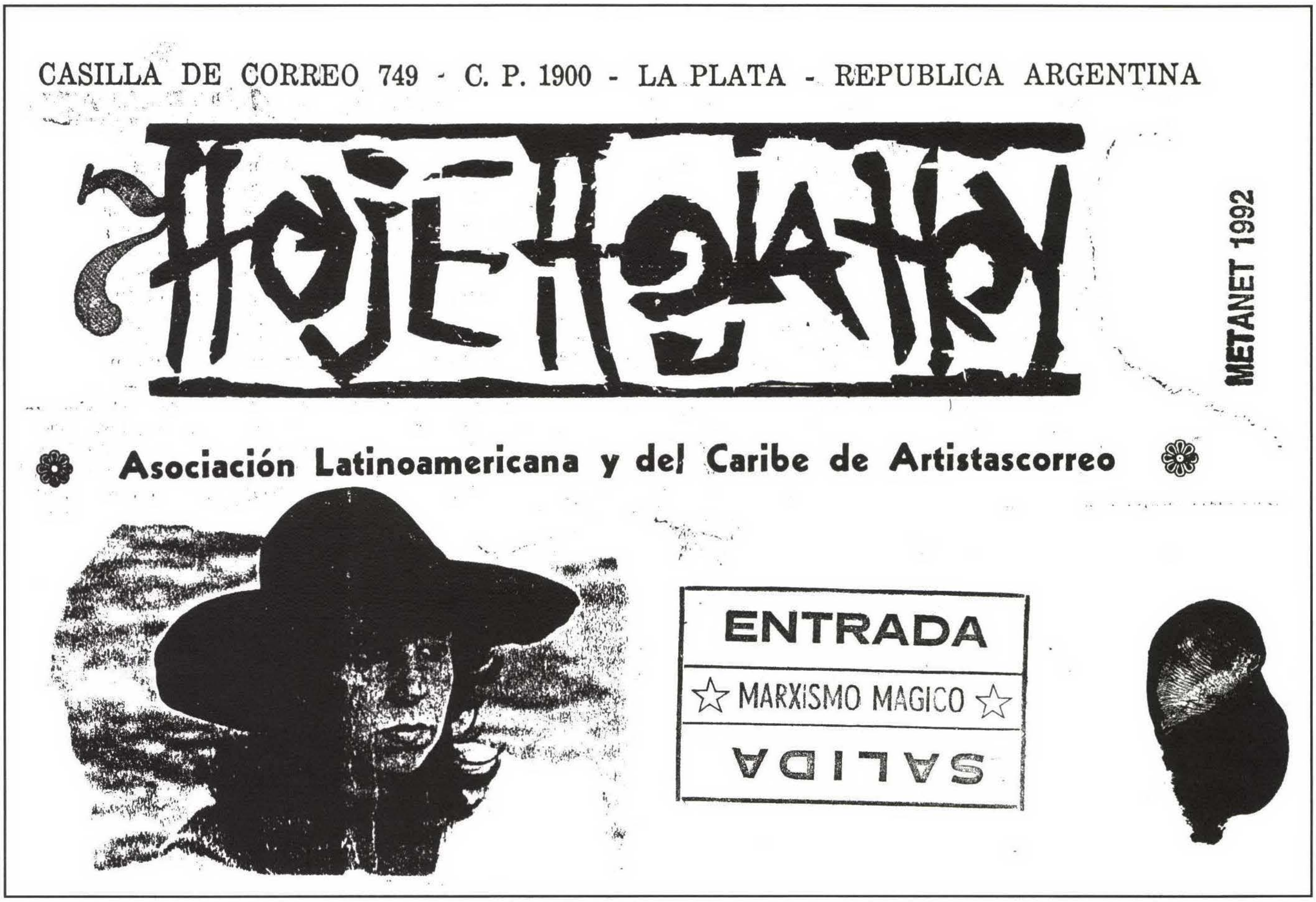


Figure 118. Graciela Gutiérrez Marx, *Hoje Hoja Hoy*, Argentina, 1992. Mail art zine of the Association of Latin American and Caribbean Mail Artists. Edited by Graciela Marx (portrait above).

The Latin American reality is so strong and contradictory that it can almost permanently besiege us without weighing possibilities or stages of a patient consciousness in a change of situation. Ours is the land of great contrasts, and on a major or minor scale, South America is just that: colder than, yet as painful and penetrating as the Caribbean sun. We are always out on the ledge and we like that in spite of the fear and terror that are present.

Just the other day my good friend Gustavo Mariano said to me with a beaming face of true happiness, "We've tried everything, and everything has failed, that's why I have hope—because we have the privilege of having to begin again, to inaugurate." Now it seems that a new wind blows here like a sleeping need that begins to bellow. We must learn to live, we want to live together! We must work for a united anti-imperialist front among ourselves (those within Argentina) and with all our brothers from Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil and Central America. We must learn to be born again. We must be allowed to be born again, but this time with equal opportunities.

Only by means of a permanent and unrestricted exercise of freedom to critically express or represent reality can we produce new forms, or "languages of transformation," capable of modifying the horizon of our popular poetic consciousness. Only these creative events, by and for the people, will be both the answer and resistance to oppression and silencing as well as the first utterance in a new language of creation.

Here there must be only one privilege: that of the eternally subdued, oppressed and suppressed. That we, the intellectually privileged, must offer ourselves to them, so

that they can express and overcome the living contradictions of their being in the world, with dignity, justice and liberty!

And vanguard art? I believe we can't go back and ask ourselves how to communicate better to "ill-informed" spectators, or how to better articulate our individual "games" in social relations that our daily lives so niggardly propose. We can't "self-install" ourselves in apparent vanguard positions as seekers of new languages, and believe that a revolutionary art takes form beginning with conceptual, functional, and formal innovations.

To renounce ourselves as "creators" of works of art with or without profession is a complete statement and a re-acknowledgment of our limitations as well as an incarnate commitment to reality.

The great Latin American work of art should be the social practice of a new creative consciousness that will indefectibly fly into the birth of a new poetic that will mark the beginning, not the end of a liberating process that can no longer be professionalized.

We must create. This impulse to make something new, to construct another reality, the unhappiness that has gone before us in the past, the permanent insurrection in our people, is now almost a generalized and solid sentiment, a sentiment that will allow us to rescue, on all levels of human culture, creative and poetic processes that are also involved in the realization of acts of great simplicity.

Today's artists (Artist?) will offer themselves as project programmers (according to Neide de Sa), that will be poetically built by public heterogeneity and will be now an artist by and for the others. From this collective activity that we hope will determine new forms, rituals, and fashion will serve life and liberty.

Love is not obedient. It is eminently subversive. It never adapts. It's an eternal movement or change, nor does it run out or consume itself, and for that very reason, any kind of passion or creation, such as art, is generally understood as a danger to the stability of the civilized system.

Art is at the same time love, a form of knowledge (as our clever and radical professor of Philosophy and Aesthetic, Manuel Lòpez Blanco, taught us) and a transformation of reality. In every living culture, contemporary or archaic, poetry is a vital, social, even liturgical act. Therefore, the poetic function is at the same time a cult, a game, a celebration, craftsmanship, knowledge, an extension of the conscience and freedom. Hence, there will be confusion in languages and intimacy between the relation and knowledge of equal rights for the transformation and creation of an "another-same" reality.

We must create, we are creating, a work of art that will be within itself, a gathering of offering, an open proposal of education for voluntary modesty. Thus the sign will become again a tool to create and not the point of arrival for culturization. Only recently have we been able to defend collectively the right of all men and women to use their creative energy, without subjecting each message to one of "consumption" or "knowledge," which they are obliged to, as a necessity.

There are many paths to choose, in spite of the might of this world, and these paths are opening up in the poorest and most exploited regions of this earth. They are probably the only ones capable of initiating a new development of man, thanks to progress, or the lack thereof.

We can't convince ourselves of the idea that "only a handful of poets are born." Undoubtedly, the "systems" take an active role in exercising their controls to assure that "many more poets" aren't produced. But, when that happens, when "the man on the bottom rung" raises his voice to speak his mind—that in itself becomes a feat. There will be no armies that can silence him because his message will be incarnate and will always grow.

For the unity in creation, and as an homage to the marginal peoples of Central and South America, this pamphlet is written and delivered.

* * * * * *

"We Must Have A Folk Art Without Artists" was read in Rosario, Provincia de Santa Fe, on September, 1984 by Graciela Gutiérrez Marx.

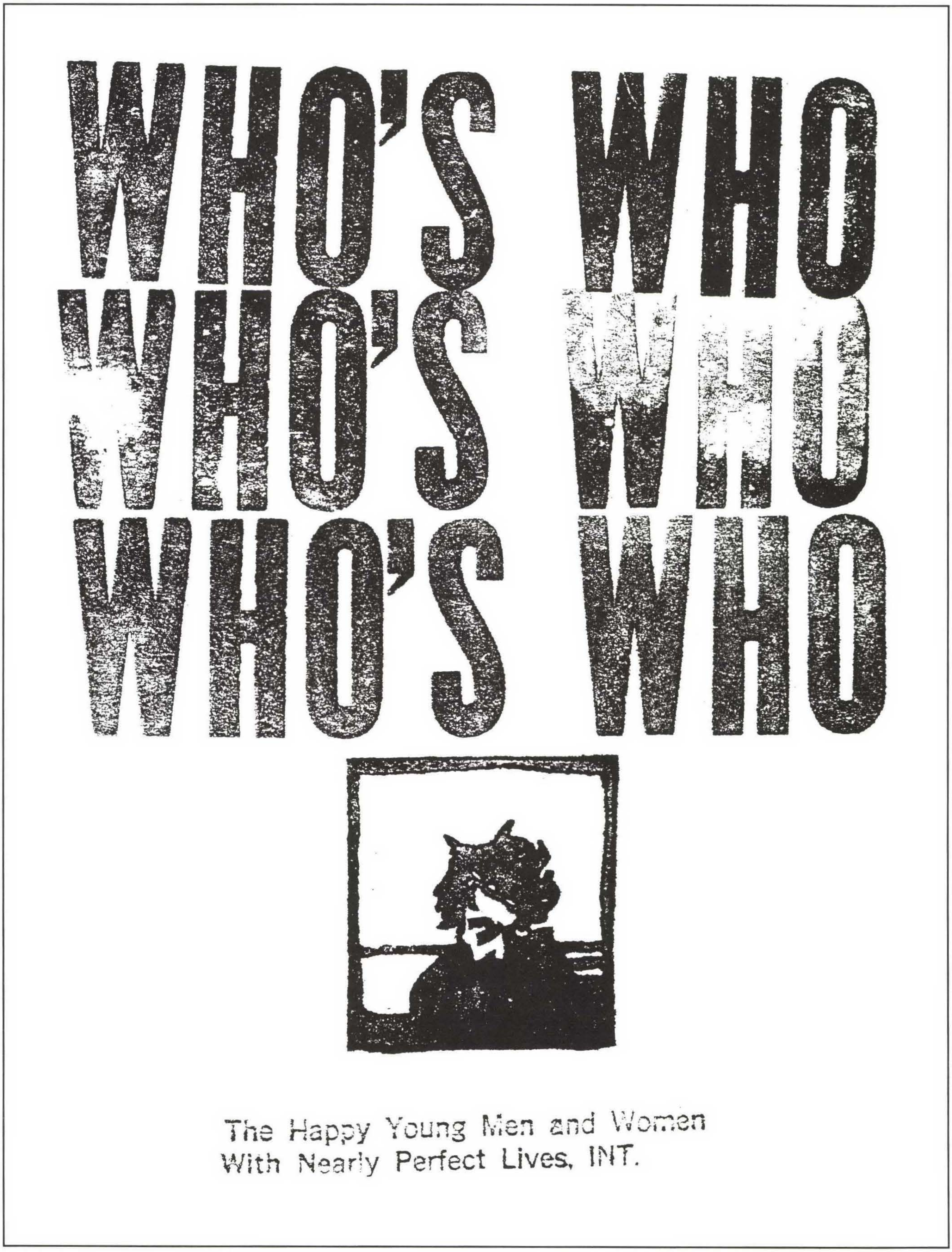


Figure 119. John P. Jacob, Rubber Stamped Folder of *Who's Who of the Happy Young People Enterprises (HYPE)*, U.S.A., 1982. Mail Art Project.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 33

MAIL ART: AESTHETIC REVOLUTION OR PERSONAL EVOLUTION?

John P. Jacob

The root of mail art is communication, the cry of the isolated for community. Ideally, mail art is the communion of many voices, no two entirely alike, forming a strange yet delicate music. In such a communion of voices, a constant crisscrossing of information between individuals throughout the world, lies the foundation of the mail art "network." As the individual grows within his or her community, new ideas and information are brought into the mail art network. Thus, the language of the network evolves with the individuals who comprise it.

Ideally, the language of the mail art network transcends the individual voices of its participants. The transcendent network forms the universal subconscious of all its participants, and they hold fast to it as a strong, firm ground, their individual voices within it evolving in increasingly rich harmonies. The evolution of the voice of the individual and the evolution of the language of the network become inseparable. A union is formed, and a truly creative language is born.

That many of those seeking communication in mail art consider themselves outsiders, on the fringe of their (non-network) communities, should come as no surprise. It is, above all others, such outsiders who seek in one anothers' company refuge, comradeship, and commiseration. In his novel *The Joke*, a story of how people who have been ravaged spiritually and politically seek to ravish others, Milan Kundera writes, "Nothing brings people together more quickly and easily (though often spuriously and deceitfully) than shared melancholy." It is precisely this atmosphere in which much mail art communication is conceived.

If mail art were an iceberg and its visible tip the ideal of communication, then the vast, underlying foundation of the iceberg would consist of the isolation of the individual mail artist. Such isolation is not based strictly in physical geography, however, but also in a sense of distance. For some, isolation is experienced as the distance between home and the known centers of the world. For others, it is experienced as the distance between their work and ideas and the more popular or successful work and ideas of others. In mail art, distance is the key to communication. It is the distance of one mail artist from another, physically, mentally, or temporally, which allows that individual to put to rest all manner of fears and defenses and to seek out what is important above all: community. And, in seeking community, to find communion; to merge with the universal subconscious of the network and to speak its language. Yet it is this same distance (or series of distances), making possible the passage from isolation to community, that permits spurious and deceitful activity. It is here that the dilemma of mail art lies.

Mail art offers a variety of opportunities and challenges. Among others, mail art offers the opportunity for criminal activity, for activities that break the rules of the art world as well, at times, as the rules of the larger world that we live in. The challenge that mail art offers to all, from those who live by the rules to those whose greatest goal is to break them, is to create artworks in the process. And, while mail art challenges some to see in ways that we had not previously considered, to accept each piece of mail art as an equal piece of information, it also offers the

opportunity to create works that challenge the limits of tolerance.

Mail artists have worked hard to establish and maintain the distance between themselves and the marketplace. To create an art world in which they and the work that they do may not be trivialized by commercialism and competition, mail artists send their works to one another, exhibit in their own spaces, and publish in their own books and magazines. Further, mail artists have established an "unwritten" set of guidelines by which all exhibitions and other treatments of mail art are to be measured. These guidelines are: All work sent to a mail art exhibition must be exhibited; No jury may select work for a mail art exhibition; No fee may be required for participation in a mail art exhibition; All works received become the property of the exhibition coordinator; All participants in a mail art exhibition should receive, in appreciation of the gift of his or her work to the exhibition, documentation of some kind.

It is this set of guidelines, holding the activities of mail artists aloof from the art world and the marketplace, which appears to lend mail art its revolutionary aesthetic. Yet in the establishment of such guidelines mail artists have opened for themselves a Pandora's box of problems. Rather than creating an art world in opposition to the marketplace, mail artists have simply created a parallel art world, an anti-art world with an oppositional rhetoric and stance, but with hierarchical values equal to those from which it seeks to dissociate itself. By the setting of guidelines, by the coming together of congresses and the writing of official histories, mail artists open the way for the banding together in clubs of those who agree, the disbanding of those who do not, for dissent among groups and, ultimately, for competition between mail artists and mail art clubs. The oppressive linearity of rules, associations, and histories is at odds with the playful anarchy of mail art.

Guidelines, ideal as they may seem in theory, serve best to keep the ideal of aesthetic revolution that mail art offers in the hands of the few who simply disregard them, opting instead for personal evolution. The rest, struggling with the politics of a system that demands no politics, are themselves politicians. Like the characters in Kundera's novel, who inadvertently but mercilessly seek to ravish those who have ravaged them (who, no doubt, were inadvertently but mercilessly ravaged by others who...) mail art politicians seek, through guidelines, associations, and histories, to lose no opportunity available to any other mail artist in an art world antithetical to the marketplace where they may achieve the status of anti-hero. In real terms, this contradiction leads nowhere. Those who allow themselves to be tangled up in it are being led in the same direction.

Ethical guidelines, without a moral and aesthetic sensibility to back them, do not serve the mail art community in any manner beyond establishing a dogma on the basis of which the faithful may feel justified in banding together against those who, in some manner, stand against them. If mail artists must have guidelines, it is crucial they demand other mail artists live up to the same moral, political, aesthetic, and social responsibilities demanded of others. Only by approaching the world with a combined sense of ethical and aesthetic concerns, bearing in mind the needs of artists as well as their responsibilities as world citizens, will mail artists come to communicate with others. Although mail art is a potentially open door, the decision to hold it shut remains securely in their hands.

Mail art is potentially an open door to the world. In addition to the larger issues of communication, it offers artists the opportunity to discover new avenues for their work, and to grapple with the problems extant in today's art world. This opportunity demands that mail artists work together with other artists working in different, sometimes

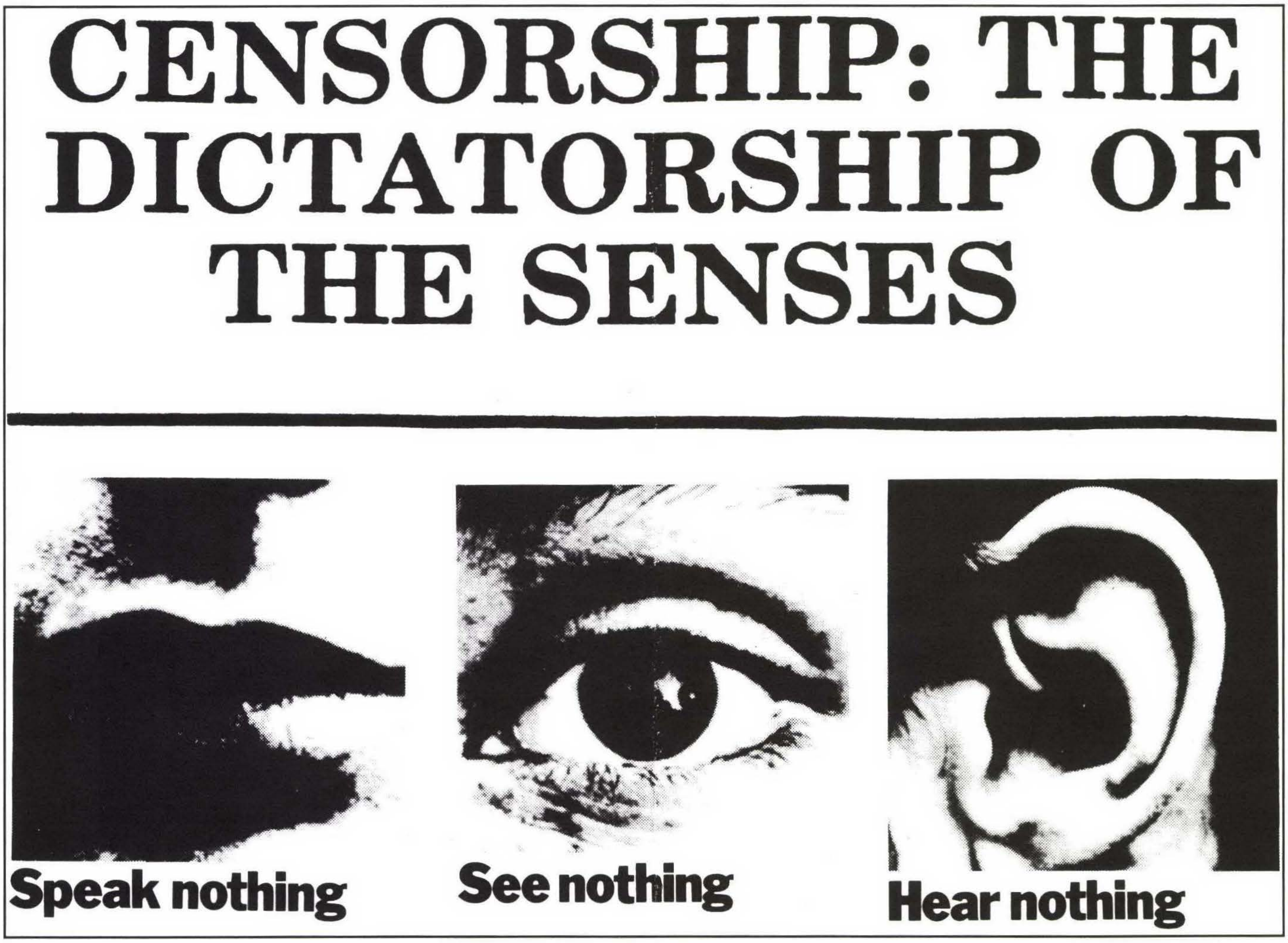


Figure 120. Stephen Perkins, *Censorship: The Dictatorship of the Senses*, U.S.A.

opposite, directions. If mail art's claim to be an open network for communication is to be perceived as honest, then mail artists must do more than allow all interests and treatments equal voice: they must actively participate in, and spread their influence among other forms of creative practice. Communication at its purest, which mail art purports to represent, implies freedom of speech. If mail art is as pure and spiritual an activity as its practitioners like to say it is, then surely both they and it can withstand the battering they may receive from the "corrupt arts," responding like demons to a piece of the true cross during a much-needed exorcism.

In 1985, when this essay was begun, there was much talk of mail art as an international movement, especially among those of us who lived in or near New York City. Over the years that this text has lain unused in my files; my experience of the world, and consequently my understanding of the place of the artist within it, have changed. If I were to begin to write again today, I would depart altogether from the issue of communication, which is central to the practice of mail art and needs no further elaboration. Today, I would like to raise the complex issue of marginalization in the many cultures in which it occurs. What, for example, is the nature of

communication between cultures that are marginalized, as mail artists working Eastern Europe were considered until recently, and cultures that adopt marginalization, as we who congregated in and around New York must be recognized? How can we hope to communicate with each other across the chasm that divides force from choice? And do force and choice result in different "qualities" of communication?

Marginalization is a tool of censorship. It is painful to me that so many American mail artists continue to regard marginalization as central to their anti-art status. By accepting marginalization, mail artists strengthen the culture of censorship that has developed in the United States during the Reagan years, and that is now finding its voice among the conservative right wing and the "moral majority." It is my belief that mail artists must re-integrate themselves with their non-network communities, and fight against all forms of marginalization, social, political, and aesthetic. American mail artists might learn a profound lesson from Eastern Europeans like György Galantai, who used the mail to promote creative activity and communication among young Hungarian artists during the 1970s and 1980s, and in the process organized the largest public archive of alternative artistic works and documentation in Eastern Europe; or like Joseph Huber and Karia Sachse in East Berlin, who, during the same period, managed to instill political activism in the rigidly controlled areas of public art and art education using mail art.

In 1985, in an article in *ArtForum*, Greil Marcus wrote mail art off as "an immediately quaint form that excused itself from history." Articles were published, books printed, congresses convened, but the glory days of mail art as a movement seem to have come and gone. Since 1985, many mail artists have left the New York area; several (myself included) have dropped out of the network altogether. Nevertheless, for those who continue to practice mail art as well as for those who do not, the ideal of communication remains critically important. Among the practitioners of mail art today, as among the mail artists of every "generation," are many who use it for what it is most: a network for democratic communication and the exchange of ideas. Such work needs no regulation, for it raises social consciousness on a global level. Such work offers all people, artists and non-artists alike, significant new ways for experiencing and representing the world. It offers a "new global strategy." Ultimately, mail art must cross the distances, the isolation upon which it is based, and lead us back into the world.

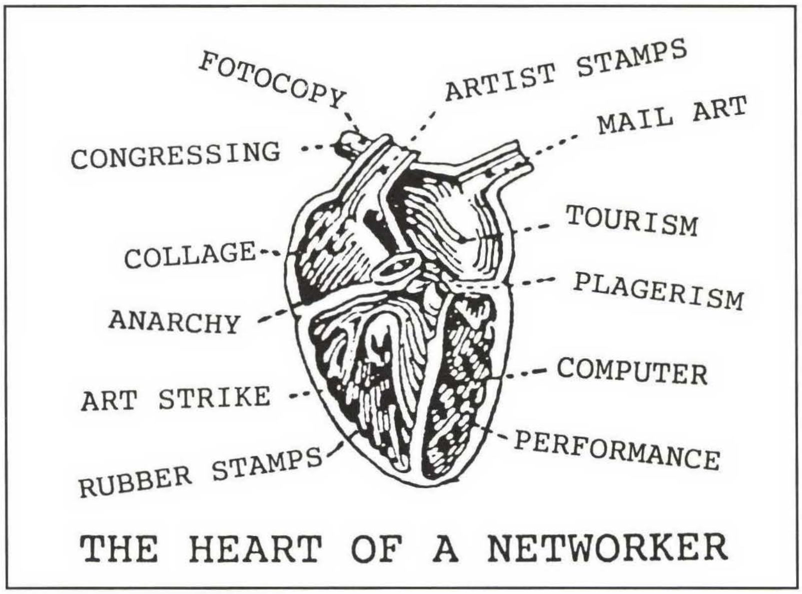


Figure 121. Mark Corroto a.k.a. FaGaGaGa, *The Heart of A Networker*, U.S.A., 1992. Postcard.

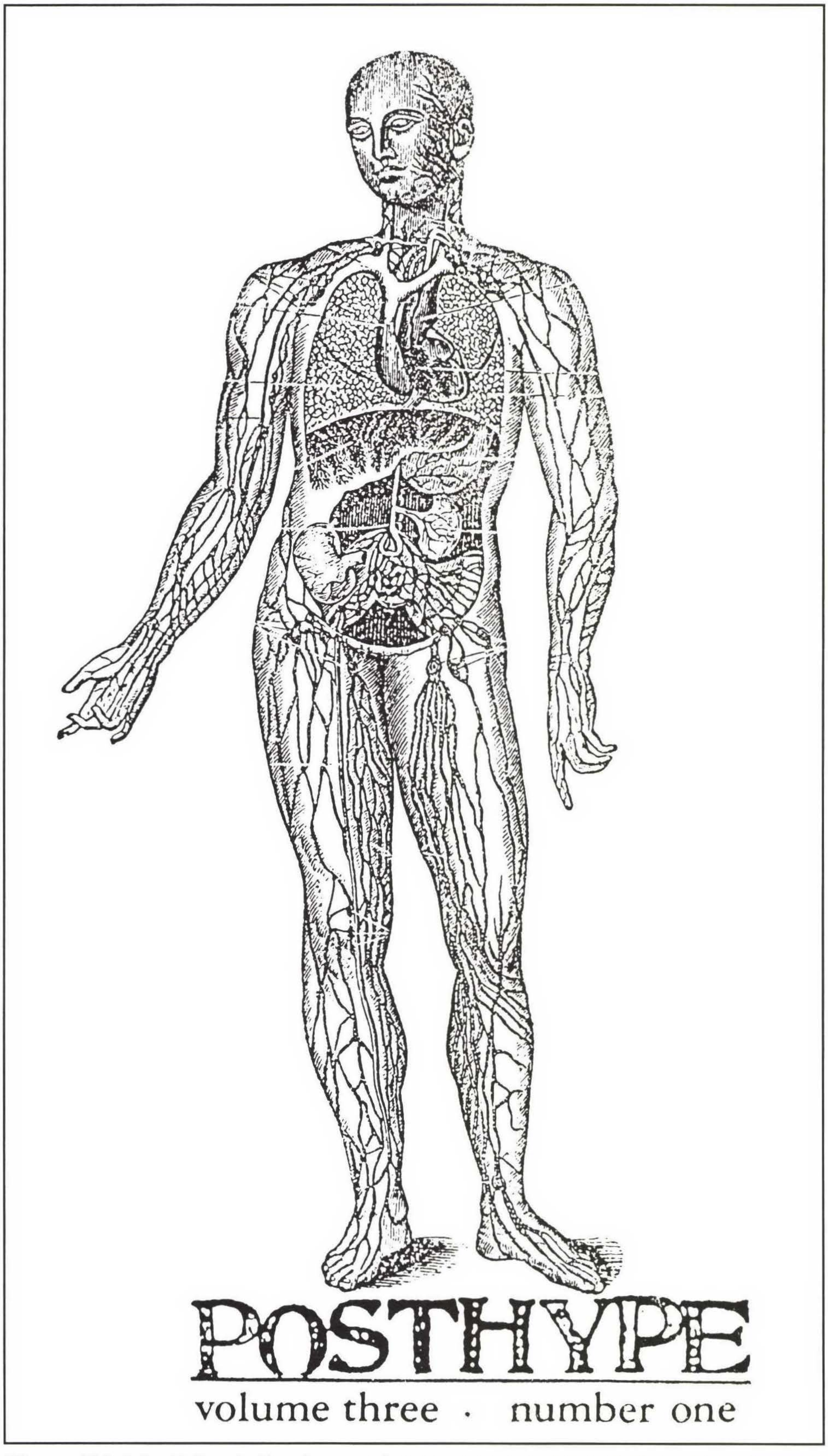


Figure 122. John P. Jacob, *Posthype, Vol. 3, No. 1*, U.S.A, 1984. Mail Art Zine. A classic mail art issue based on the February 1984 Artists Talk On Art Mail art panel discussions at Wooster St. Gallery, SoHo, NYC. John P. Jacob recorded and printed the entire dialogue of the first public mail art debate. Participants included Dr. Ronnie Cohen, Carlo Pittore, Anna Banana, Faith Heisler, Roberta Sperling, E.M. Plunkett, John Evans, Alex Igloo, Mark Bloch, Ken Friedman, Dick Higgins, Richard Kostelanetz, John Held, Crackerjack Kid, David Cole, E.F. Higgins, Steve Random, Marilyn R. Rosenberg, Louise Neaderland, and Robert Morgan, among others.



Figure 123. Leavenworth Jackson, *Time Travels*, U.S.A., 1986, Collage.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 34
MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS IN THE MAIL

Leavenworth Jackson

We live in an imperfect world. For those of us who are idealists as well as artists and visionaries, it may follow that we hunger and thirst for a better world. So we busy ourselves about the creation of alternative contexts in which to act upon our ideals. I have approached mail art in this way. Imagine our frustration when those ideally conceived networks predictably manifest the very same foibles that plague our larger world. Back to the drawing board! The good news is that as we develop skills to heal our networks and ourselves, we heal our larger, "imperfect" world as well, for they and we were never separate.

Imagine the dismay of femail artists who frequently encounter the question "Where are women artists?" The invisibility of women's work in a world overflowing with the fruits of women's labor is nothing new. Our work is everywhere apparent but seldom recognized. Femail artists abound. For twelve years now these "invisibly" artful women have filled my mailbox with quite visibly fabulous mail of every description. My amazement and gratitude continues for their diverse, abundant and endlessly inventive expressions of camaraderie. For those who continue to puzzle over where the women are, I offer the following:

Certain circles within the mail art network are overwhelmingly male insofar as they faithfully mirror so many aspects of the mainstream art world. Concerns such as establishing authorities, guidelines, documentation, manifestos, and hierarchies, either exclude or do not interest many women. Years ago, during the height of mail art manifesto mania, Freya Zabitsky carved an eraser stamp that read: "Men make manifestos, Women make friends." There are women and men who either have dropped out of (what I will call for lack of a better term) "official" mail art circles or who never bothered with them. We are active art correspondents, we have become friends, we travel great distances to meet, and our purpose seems to be to enjoy one another. We cultivate listening skills as carefully as we craft our statements. Our exchanges tend to be personal, exploratory, inquiring, playful and supportive, unlike the generally didactic, mass produced, proclamatory and random exchanges which often predominate in "official" mail art circles. We are not experts; we are participants. As Elizabeth Abraham wrote from the Greenham Common Peace Camps: "We have no leaders here. All the stars are in the sky."

If I were to characterize "women's work" on the broader mail art network, inclusivity and interconnectedness would be key features. Women (and men of kindred spirit) explore personal, political, environmental, and spiritual issues with an awareness of the patriarchal attitudes that frame and artificially compartmentalize these same issues in mainstream culture.

Does feminism relate to the "women's work" mentioned above? Among the many viewpoints outside of mainstream white male culture that stimulate lively exchange, feminism is notable for including all beings in its purview. Mountains and rivers too. So I'd like to say that feminism is alive in mail art today when our activity is inclusive and cooperative. Sexism, racism, and homophobia have no place here. Laying down these burdensome attitudes is prerequisite to exploring ways of relating to one another and to our environment.

In a mail art questionnaire, I was asked to respond to the issue of pornography in mail art. I feel that violent pornography in mail art reveals a deeply conservative and misogynist element within the network that passively mirrors some of the most destructive aspects of mainstream culture. Pornographic imagery is a violently exclusive visual language that is well understood by femail artists. This does not imply an advocation of censorship. Since when has any suppression of the symptoms led to a cure of the disease? The dearth of women in some "official" mail art circles may be an indication of our frustration with a tiresome and remarkably obdurate male attachment to sexist attitudes and imagery. In this sense, perhaps ours is the original "Art Strike."

The above remarks are not intended to create or describe a new mail art hierarchy where personal exchanges, long devalued by their relegation to the women's sphere, are newly elevated to the lonely pinnacle of "most valid artistic networking activity." Acknowledging the fact that some male artists have put down or ignored women's art for its personal and inclusive aspects does not imply a feminine backlash of similar hierarchical thinking, i.e., that "our way" is better, more authentic, more valid, etc. Different ways of networking can co-exist side by side on a level playing field. Honoring diversity fosters vitality.

* * * * * *

Thanks to Sally Mericle, Susan Newell, Margaret Hoyt, Shirley Borchardt, Steve Frenkel, Elizabeth Abraham, David Orr, Connie Hwang, Jane Rosemont, the City of Berkeley, Anna Banana, Don Carr, Maria Moya, Anne Norcia, Susan Jokelson, Crackerjack Kid, Phyllis Cairns, Lynn Richardson, Lowry Thompson, Helen Wallis, Suze Weinburg, Julie Hagan-Bloch, Steve Sikora, Mark DeChagas, Andy Knapp, Moira Ann Collins, Nina Berg, Eleanor Kent, Richard Wanderman, Rick Banning, Susanna Cuyler, Ed Marthey, Howard Plummer, Ellen O'Donnell, Sue Nan Douglas, Candy MacMahon, Carol Stetser, Jenny deGroot, Freya Zabitsky, Christine Smith, Shannon Weil, Emma Goldman, Curtis Uyeda, Ron Dellums, Roz, Jeanne pasle-green, et al. ...without whom my networking would lack the stars in the sky.



Figure 124. Beth Jacobson, *Girlilla Post*, U.S.A., 1994, Handcanceled Artists' Stamp.

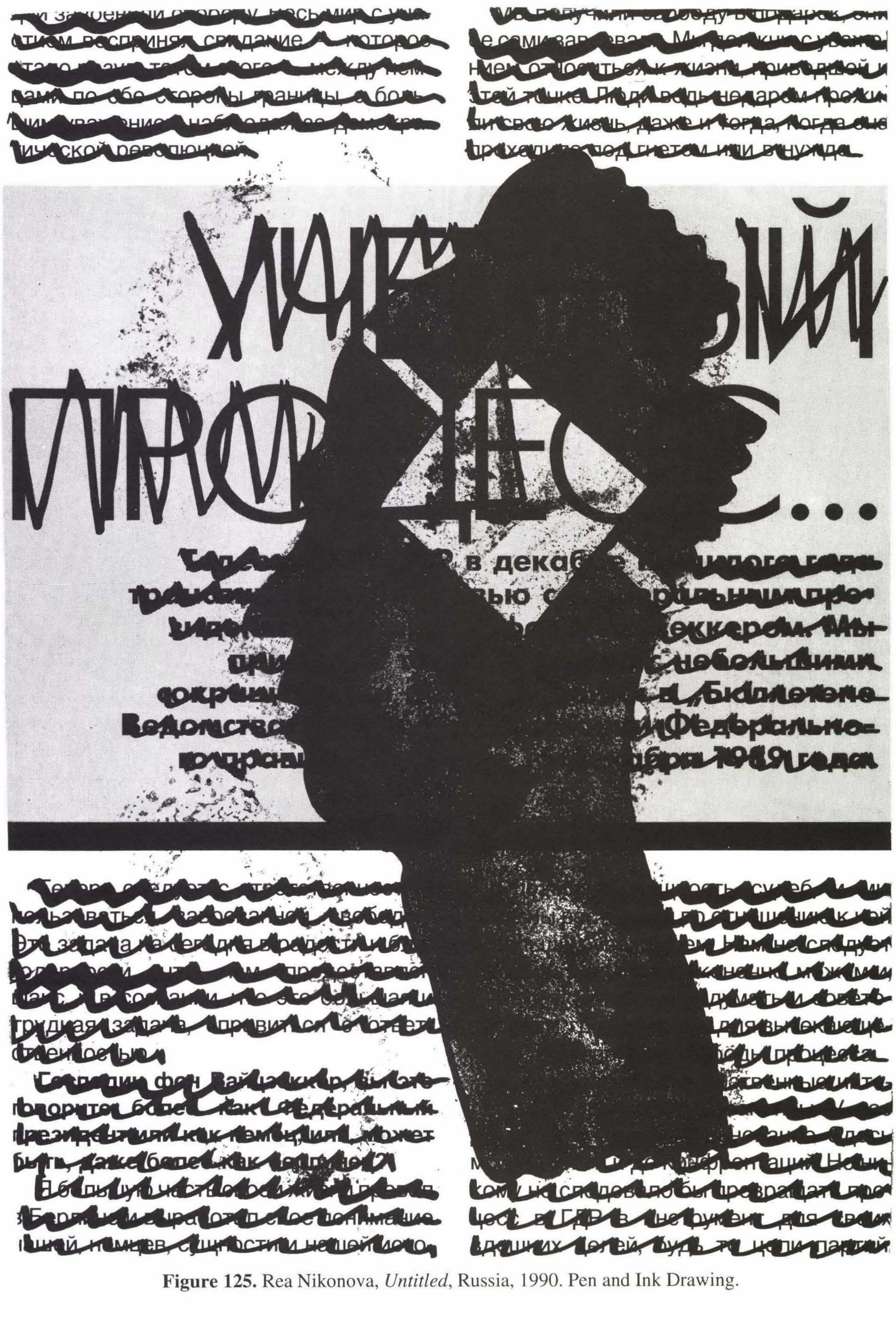
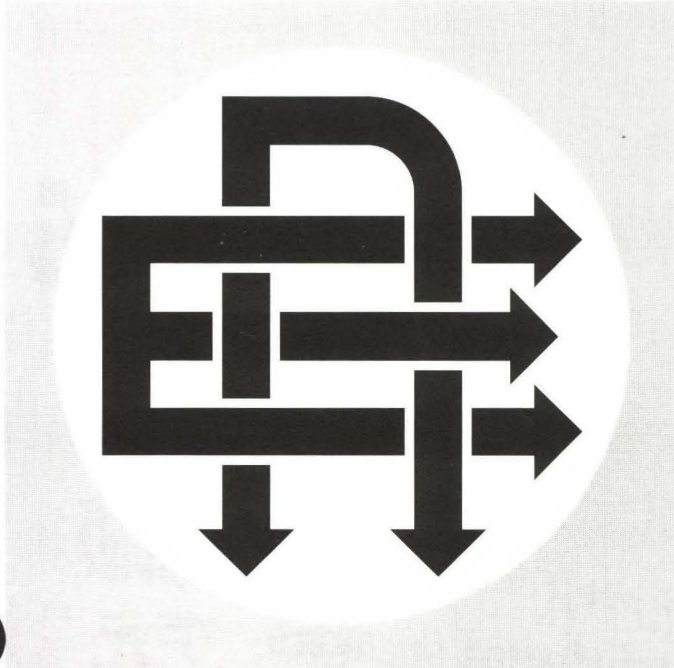


Figure 125. Rea Nikonova, *Untitled*, Russia, 1990. Pen and Ink Drawing.

Ethereal Realms
Dreamtime breaks constructs
Imposed by keepers of the strictures,
myths eject their gurustamp implants and
appear erupting asStampart asMailart.
Poems and fictions parallel allAction
con and uncon scious. When
mythology articulates itself
time recalls itself timeless
howEver short howEver distant.

Coco Gordon



PART 6
ETHEREAL REALMS

Mail art can be a hopeful process that contributes to the humanization of global culture. Parables, visions, dances, dreams, and poems of the ethereal open network are presented here by artists who create, not to calculate, measure, define or break the ethereal dream, but to recall it. In doing so they seek to articulate a living mythology.

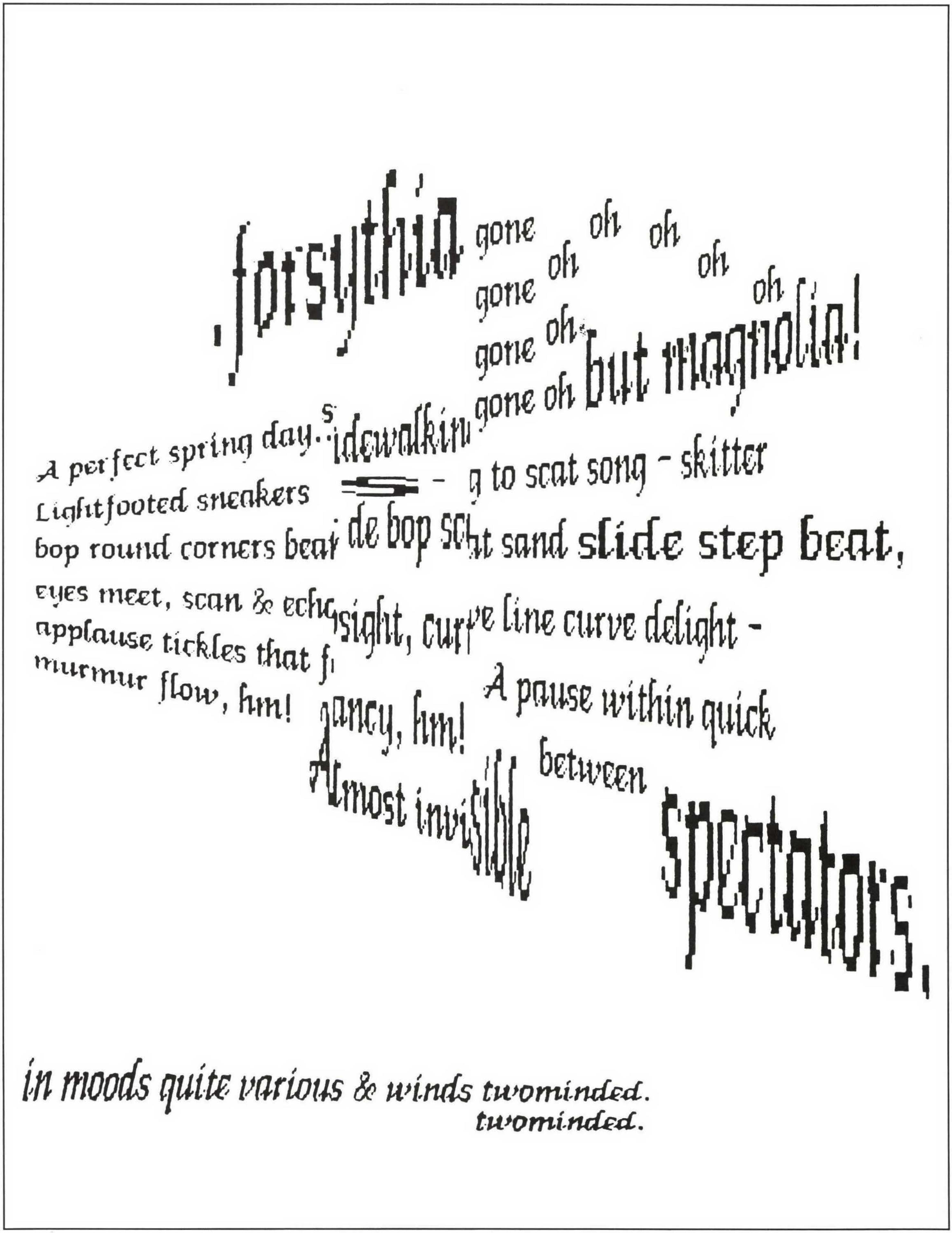


Figure 126. Sheril Cunning and David Cole, Detail of a page from *Fig Nonce*, U.S.A., 1990. Collaborative Mail Art Bookwork.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 35

WEBDANCE

Sheril Cunning

With a halting gait, the old man approached water's edge and waded out waist deep. The tranquility of my stroll amidst fragrant plumeria in deepening twilight was quickly shattered when I realized he was fully clothed. Feeling that this was no peaceful evening swim, I was in a state of alarm. Suddenly the man threw his arms upward and an enormous net unwound from his body and billowed in ever-expanding cloudlike forms across the star-studded sky. What had been panic pulsing through my whole being only seconds before now became a prayer of thanksgiving for this lovely and awesome sight. Several years later I learned that this is a time-honored fishing technique, but by then little did I care, for on that tropical shore I had seen a webdance, a net catching moon and stars.

This scene was enacted in 1980, a point in time midway between my first *participation* in a mail art exhibition in Auckland, New Zealand and the time in 1985 when I began *corresponding with* other mail artists. And although the beauty of that moment has stayed fresh in my mind's eye, I did not realize until recently that it is symbolic of the weaving together of words and images, life and work of thousands of artists worldwide to produce a net to catch the energies of stars and, in a rather mystical way, to bind up and heal the wounds of a humanity that has lost its ability to hear earthsong and starsong.

Being caught in this ethereal web is such a beautiful experience that the colors and songs and poems and stories of it need to be told as in the times of tribal storytelling. So it is that this story of one such experience is related, that it may go into the weaving as threads of hope and love.

Most mail art exhibitions are "documented" with a simple listing of names and addresses which are sent to the participants. These lists then often become the means of contact for other exhibitions, and they are usually very impersonal. But in 1985, a beautifully painted envelope appeared in my mailbox. It was one of 1200 invitations by David Cole to participate in The Scroll Unrolls, an exhibition he was organizing at the Janco-Dada Museum in Ein Hod, Israel. He had, indeed, thrown a net into the sky! Over 800 people sent work to that exhibition. Of that number, six became partners with David in exchanges and collaborations which have continued for several years.

One cannot factually account for why such sharing on a more personal basis occurs. It is, perhaps, a mysterious recognition of affinity. David and I continued to correspond after his return from Israel, and during a four-year time span we exchanged many Artists' Books, an art form of mutual interest. Then in January 1989, a dream I had provided the impetus for David to suggest that we do a collaborative book.

The only previous experience I'd had with such an endeavor was very unpleasant. But all the beauty of David's art—sublime colors, playful figures, sensuous line, wit and inventiveness, the rhythm and melody of his words—passed before my eyes, so I quickly accepted his invitation. I wanted to be a part of his magic world and the visual music he creates.

In 1982, David had originated a unique form of collaboration in which each person works directly upon, or contributes to, the same page with words or images that

either continues throughout to bring new thoughts to the total concept, or are a direct response to the "moves" the partner has finished making. It is a process that begins with both partners being equal, with respect for each other's talents and beliefs, even though one or the other may be more knowledgeable or accomplished in some technical aspect. And so, in accepting, it was my goal not only to help heal the wounds of male/female antagonism that have existed in society, but also to go beyond the aspects of opposites and separateness to find the place of sameness, a place where both are fully human, a place where both laugh and both cry, a place where both are strong and weak, but not prideful of the strength nor ashamed of weakness, a place where both can sing and dance in celebration of unity.

There were also two challenging corollaries to working on the same page. The first was that each partner had the freedom to change, or even to reject, the contribution made by the other. This involves a willingness to go into a state of discovery, to be open to new ideas and possibilities, as well as a certain letting-go of one's own ego. Along the way you learn patience, trust, tact and diplomacy, and perseverance. You learn when to encourage in the face of the partner's dismay, or when the dismay is a correct judgment, to let go. In stretching and testing the limits, you learn to trust the partner's choices even though you may be uncomfortable with them; and you peel back layers of self-protection to explore the sources of your discomfort.

The second corollary is that you start somewhere, without knowing the middle or the ending, and let the work just eventuate. The longer it takes to complete a piece, the more twists and turns there are in the road, the more you can then develop private jokes and a language that is nearly a code, and learn to respond in a way that challenges and brings out the strengths of the partner. Each addition and change requires a new evaluation so one's vision becomes increasingly focused, at the same time growing and taking in more.

As the work takes on a life of its own, you lose yourself in it and work toward *its voice* and the good of the whole. But the reverse can also be true when, for one reason or another, the partners lose the energy, a piece is not completed, and you realize the *friendship* is more important than the work. There is no blaming in this instance; rather, you value it as yet *another* learning experience and bring *that* to the next piece as well as to the relationship.

In a very literal way, you put your dreams, hopes, life and work into your partner's hands and say, "Do with these what you will." The result is that a new kind of intimacy is established as you look with another's eyes, feel with another's fingertips, and finally come to a state of heightened awareness. Understanding, compassion and tolerance grow as you confront your imperfections and weaknesses. You forgive these imperfections in yourself and in your partner to make the work of collaboration flow smoothly. And then you become aware that you needed to learn these lessons in order to progress along your individual lifepath.

Of course, you do not know any of these things when you begin; if you did, perhaps you would not have the courage to start. If you try to have these things happen, no doubt they would be as elusive as the will-o'-the-wisp. You eventuate in the same way the work does.

You cannot make things happen, but when they do, you become one with the energy and are given strengths and insights you never knew were possible. Each partner brings individuality and past influences to the work and these characteristics both remain and disappear. It is an "aha!" moment of wonder when *you disappear* but *see* the melding of two energies as one entity.

Although a dream inspired *Fig Nonce*, as our collaborative book was later titled, we did not try to use the



Figure 127. David Cole, Correspondence from David Cole to Sheril Cunning, appearing in *Fig Nonce*, U.S.A., 1990. Collaborative Mail Art Bookwork.

dream as a script. Nevertheless, the book begins and ends with a dreamstate of unity. We first chose dance as a theme because it is a subject of mutual interest and transcends our differences. But then, for nearly two months we struggled trying to decide *what* to do with it and to find a way to make our two very distinct styles and methods of working mesh. A trial-and-error period of exchanges, it was like choreographing a dance during which each person asks, "If I move this way, stretch that far, can you follow?" Then suddenly, letters were simultaneously exchanged declaring that we were, indeed, already dancing. From that time on there were many more instances of synergy, similar thoughts, dreams and works produced and exchanged on the same day. Still, no *direction* was forthcoming. Then one day while I was holding a work just received from David, I had a kind of vision which seemed to be a spirit message asking to be given physical form, a request to make a new myth of man/woman/fruit tree, one of laughter, happiness, equality, union, and renewal. Words and images then progressed as a dance of great joy toward the light and wisdom found in the fig, a "fruit" which is actually a pod containing both male and female flowers. They produce a sweet syrup to carry themselves back into the earth, the renewing cycle. The dancers ate the fruit, became one with the tree, knew their unity.

That all this could be accomplished through the postal system by two people who have never met is an extraordinary gift, one that is humbling as well as enlivening. This form of collaboration is like a symphony that can never be played the same way twice; even those making the music hear it differently. The dynamics happen according to need and readiness.

I believe that in the moment of our beginning, when two opposite forces combine, the energy of that fusion is of such magnitude it leaves a permanent imprint on our subconscious. That memory propels us forward, makes us seekers of union. As artists, when we create, for however brief a time, we return to that moment of rapture, lose ourselves and become part of the Universal Unconscious. However, most artmaking is a solitary activity. Mail art brings us out of that isolation by providing a nonhierarchical and nonjudgmental system for sharing. But it is not just the sharing of the artworks that is required of us. We must also communicate on a personal basis, share grief as well as joy and whatever gifts of insight come our way so that we *each* become more.

Perhaps this can best be described by an oriental concept known as "moon-in-water." The moon and the water are in a state of no-mind-ness; they are not aware of each other. But when all is in readiness, when the water is still and not churned by wind, when the moon is full and not veiled by clouds, they meet and in their togetherness a shimmer of great beauty is produced. The water holds the light but it is not the light; the moon appears in the water but it is not the water. They are both the *receivers of reflected light*. Neither intended to produce the shimmer but both are enhanced by it.

Throw your net into the sky.
Be in readiness to receive.
Be in readiness to give.
When the light shines in
Your net, glow with it.
– Sheril Cunning

CHAPTER 36

CORRESPONDENCE POEMS

Robert Filliou, Coco Gordon, Ayun Halliday, Marilyn R. Rosenberg, Chuck Welch, Willie Marlowe, and Dick Higgins

Telepathic Music No. 2

Robert Filliou

Dedicated but not limited to those Canadian members of the Eternal Network: Véhicule, Montreal; General Idea, Toronto; W.O.R.K.S., Calgary; Image Bank, Vancouver, and to Arman and to Corice, 380 W. Broadway, N.Y.C., R. Filliou

CONCENTRATING SILENTLY
SEND WAVES OF

GREETINGS
WEATHERLUCK
MANLUCK
WOMANLUCK

TO ANY OR ALL OF THE MEMBERS
OF THE ETERNAL NETWORK THE
WORLD AROUND

Duration: a split second to all day or all night or all day and night (all days and nights)

Performance Note: no proof of reaching or benefiting is necessary. Knowing yourself, suspecting others, to be performers of Telepathic Music is sufficient.

Suggested by Robert Filliou, ADA-Aktionen der Avantgarde Berlin 1973, as part of Research on the Eternal Network.*

* Poem courtesy of Hood Museum of Art, Fluxus Collection, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

MAIL
Ayun Halliday

The postage stamp
The stamp
The postage stamp
Meant more
Meant more
The postage stamp meant more
Than
The letter
When she thought
When she thought
Of its intimate
Hist-o-ry
With
His mouth.
His mouth.
The postage stamp meant more.

CORRESPONDANCE
Coco Gordon

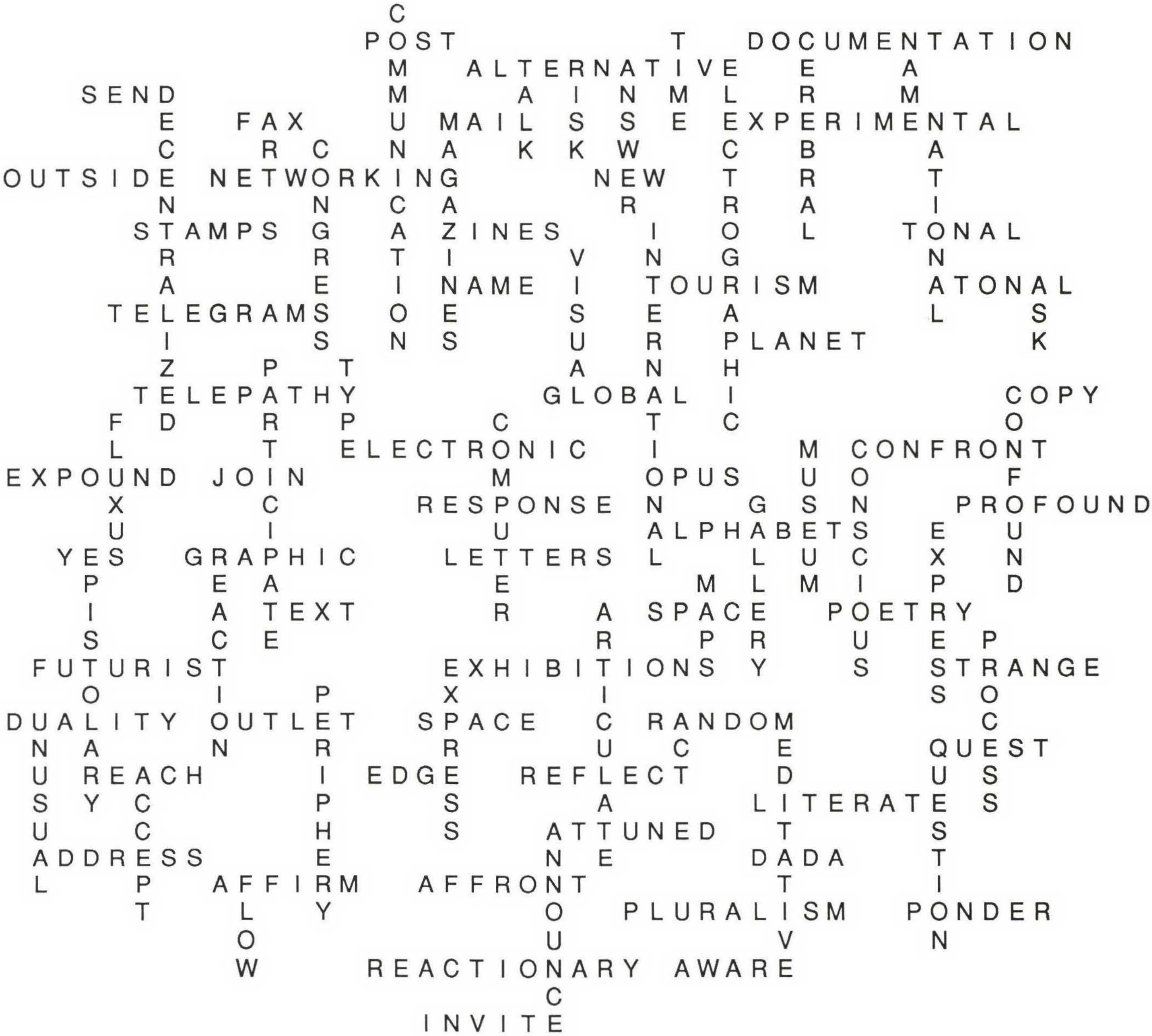
with works I make observing food
while it dries and ages
Ray Johnson brings me under his hat
an avocado
he dried slowly in his fridge.
Can I do your
hand portrait
he asks,
lifts his hat,
I photograph double exposure
then
put my hand
on the floor.
He draws around it,
feet scribing
a concentric dance. correspondance.
We complete another
art/life
exchange
visible by chance chancedance
only
to those who may
(or not)
understand the art
of
prison-walk
Buddha University
Blue Eyes Club
New York School Betty Boop
correspondence.



N.E.O.N.I.C.S.
(knee-on-nix)

Net-workers
eThe-Real
open
new
interconnected
communication
spirit

Figure 128. (Above) Marilyn R. Rosenberg, *Network Dancer*, U.S.A., 1992. Visual Poetry.
(Left) *N.E.O.N.I.C.S.*, Marilyn R. Rosenberg and Chuck Welch.



NETWORKING S CRABBLE

Willie Marlowe

americans at work

a chant for robert filliou's eternal network

by dick higgins

and ſheathing *and* bathing
and *ſcything* and *ſcything*
and breathing *and* ſwathing
and *breathing* and *ſcathing*
and ſcathing *and* lathing
and *bathing* and *ſcything*
and ſoothing *and* breathing
and *ſwathing* and *ſcything*
and bathing *and* ſeething
and *wreathing* and *teething*
and wreathing *and* ſwathing
and *writhing* and *writhing*
and wreathing *and* ſcything
and *ſheathing* and *ſwathing*
and wreathing *and* lathing
and *bathing* and *ſoothing*
and breathing *and* ſheathing
and *teething* and *ſcything*
and ſoothing *and* breathing
and *ſheathing* and *breathing*
and ſoothing *and* writhing
and *ſeething* and *ſheathing*

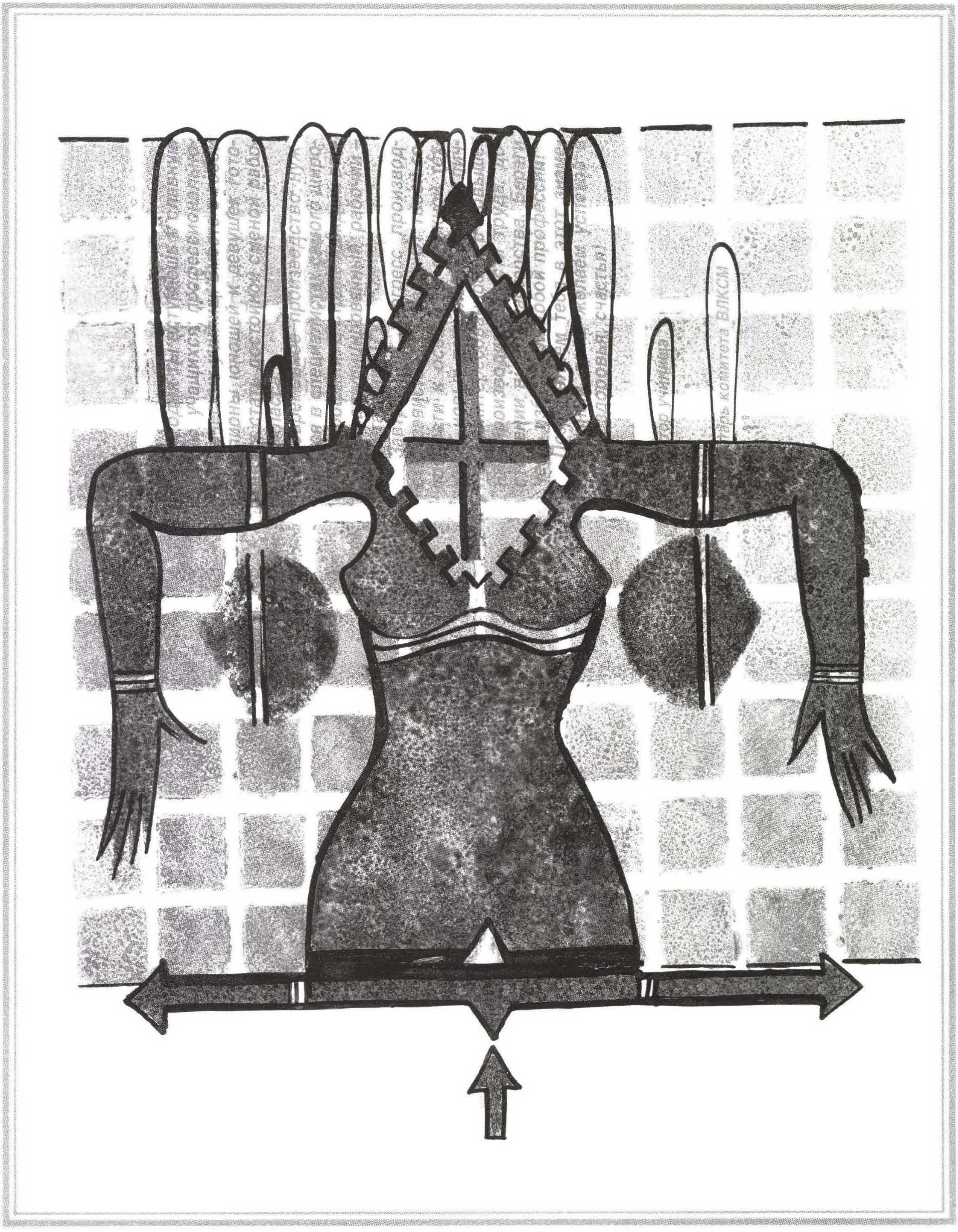


Figure 129. Rea Nikonova, *Untitled,* Russia. 1991. Mixed Media.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 37

42 DREAMS ABOUT MAIL ART

Rea Nikonova

1. My dream is to make buildings, i.e., architectural mail art complexes, out of stamps (this is more easily done with scale models—in reality, they would be made of hardened stamp-sheets).

2. I love marginals (Segay and I are marginal people according to Soviet standards).[1] Marginals add to the space of the page, they are additional platforms for the text, they are outside of a book's format. It is the same with a stamp's format (as if they were interplanetary space stations).

3. Aura of mail art, braiding of tentacles and vectors, networks of any mail art organism. Tenacles are contacts. The octopus is the hero of our mail art age. The octopus has a plurality of hands and contacts.

4. Stamps in casings, stamp sheets covered by special film, envelopes within special over-envelopes. A covering, in principle, is a very mail-artistic form.

5. The displacement of one stamp in relation to a group of stamps in a stamp-sheet makes a dissident stamp. In the same way, a single page in a book is fundamentally crooked, and so on...

6. Altering stamp or envelope, i.e., sickness of the straight line, flexible mail art, wavy lines of the frame, "marine" envelope.

7. Multilayeredness of stamp-sheet fragments, i.e., a piece-work platform for several levels of surface.

8. Transparent, fibrous stamps and envelopes (Segay sent one like this to Canada once). Transparent envelopes are convenient for the censors, and we have allowed them this pleasure.

9. Gesticular stamps, i.e., the frame (the edging of the stamp) turns from a fabricated window into a list of actions. The kinetic existence of the frame: this could be gestures that were drawn, but have become envelopes that turn around the letter.

10. Platforms of turned-down stamps, envelopes, pages, and even heads (see my drawing of Shozo Shimamoto with a section of his back turned down, in the documents from the "88" Emilio Morandi project).

11. Images "wandering" beyond their frames, or existing in the abyss between halves. A unique type of existence during an earthquake.

12. Adding your address, etc., to balanced structures—to printed matter, for example. Shaking firm things loose. Elastic, gum-like addresses and "courtesy" seals appear.

13. Borderness, existence in a structure that has no central spot, where everything is concentrated in the edges. Everyone hides in the woods, for example, but in the center, there is, say, radiation. A bordered composition emphasizes the meaning of a vacuum's most banal aspect—emptiness.

14. A rip through the platform of a print, stamp, or envelope (Fig. 130) allows us to enter a different environment, a different world in which the governing laws are not always

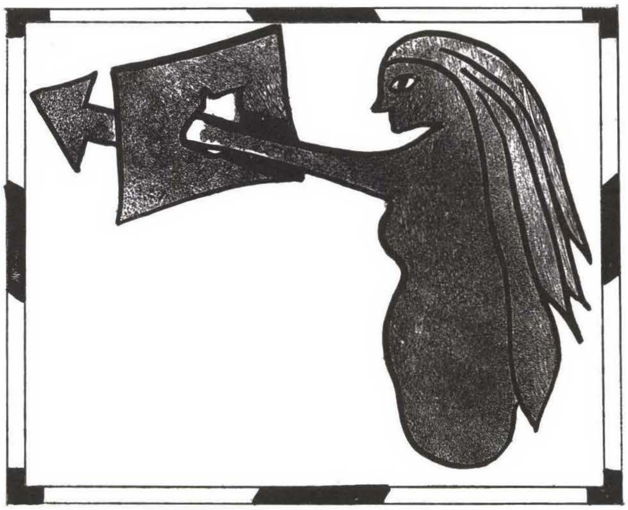


Figure 130. Rea Nikonova, *Untitled*, Russia, 1991. Drawing.

parallel to those of the previous one, but in our cosmic age, such rips are a simple necessity, and artists often use this technique. During a poetry performance in Leningrad, I tore through a sheet of paper with a howling fist that had letters in it. See the drawing concerning this in the Yugoslavian fanzine *Open World*.[2]

15. Phonetic mail-waves, waves of the global ocean of communication, i.e., the fundamental metaphor of communication.

16. Half of an imprint is a beautiful reticence that creates prerequisites for dividing art according to sex, i.e., into the aesthetic half of the cancellation, into the "strong" half, etc. Such a two-halved art rehabilitates the compromising idea of a *border* (the envelope with half of an imprint).

17. Eroded frame outlines, corrosion of the image, teeth torn off the stamp, unclear imprints—these are the aesthetics of a mail art snob.

18. Protuberances in the teeth and edging of a stamp, "splashes" in the straight lines of a stamp or envelope—this is called the "volcanic" style, which is very dear to me.

19. Auctionability of mail document and all sorts of invitations: add something, stick something on, tear off a piece of the rubber cancellation stamp taking half of a last name for yourself, claim authorship (so many do this without recognizing the aesthetic roots of their actions).

20. Quantum existence of art torn into strips (I show my stampsheets like this). A smooth, *whole* surface is boring, it is false, there is nothing whole in our world.

21. Vacuous prints, stamps, imprints, empty envelopes, the absence of thought in the head—all of this is beautiful (Fig. 131).

22. Tactile stamps, rough envelopes, mail art for the blind, i.e., for everyone.

23. Wearing a necklace of stamps, or envelopes, prints on the forehead, imprints on the wrist instead of a watch, a brooch of sealing wax. Invoice and cover husbands (also hanging around the neck)—all of this will come in the course of time.

24. I am a package, you are a rubber stamp, all this together means a blow, a fight. Someone gets it.

25. Quantum existence of a more divided whole, where there is almost no hint at *whole*, i.e., pieces of envelopes, pieces of a print.

26. "Kulinart" is to eat stamps with a fork at the table with an envelope on its neck. Noodles made of stamps.

27. Letters are tattoos: on the hands, stomach, etc.

28. Doubled envelopes (like a pocketbook with two sections) and prints. Doubled envelopes with several addresses would be especially interesting. How would the post office react—they're glued together—they can't be torn apart and have to be sent to different people. Poor little postal official.

29. Mail principles turned inside out: envelopes inside of letters, an address inside a closed envelope marked with the words "address inside," and so forth.

30. Spiral shape of stamps, prints, handwriting. Mail-tornadoes are born this way.

31. Accumulation of concentrated mail: an envelope completely covered with stamps on all sides and inside (hyper mail art).

32. Round envelopes and stamps, round stamp-sheets on a round little Earth. Mail art, Galilean style.

33. Anthropogenic stamps in the form of a man, envelopes, also, and imprints. Print in the form of an ear.

34. Anti-expositionism, i.e., placing stamps face down, glued surfaces on the printed side.

35. Stamp series: stamps in the form of a rosary connected together by printed image. A series of letters glued together, and so on.

36. Mail-membranes, sculptures (a bust of Cavellini or Shimamoto, for example) totally covered by stamps. Doing the same with a live person.

37. Glove-stamps, teeth-stamps (hopefully false).

38. "Rail" style. Images travel along special canals (like cable television). Letters can also be written this way. Narrow, linear paper for letters can be made this way.

39. Negation, crossed-out stamps (an old method of cancelling stamps), crossed-out addresses, crumpled envelopes, photographs, images painted over.

40. Correction as an aesthetic principle: correction of addresses, imprints, re-sealing envelopes, re-perforation.

41. Stamps as decorative mail-element, in visual poetry, for example.

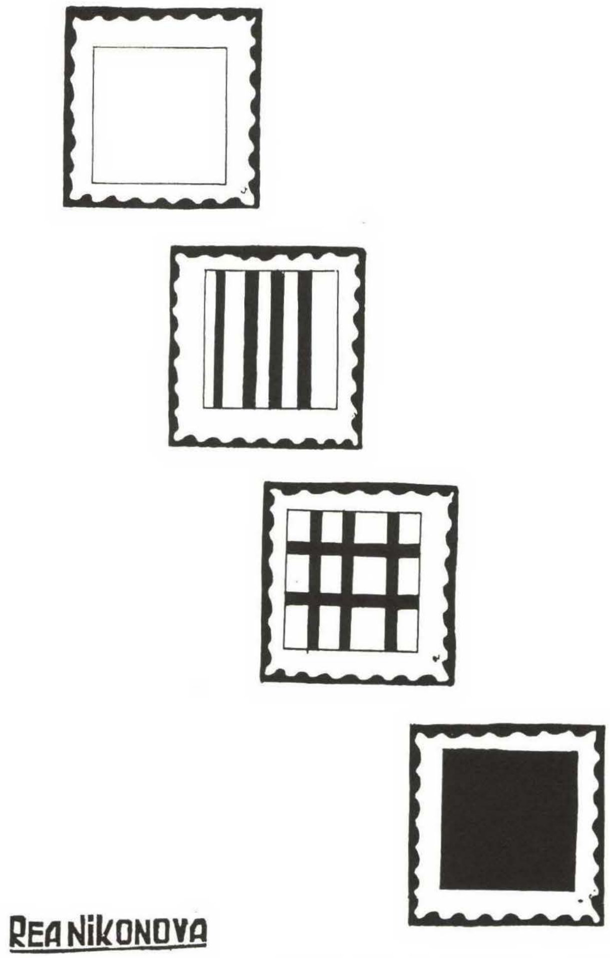


Figure 131. Rea Nikonova, *Untitled*, Russia. 1990. Pen and Ink Drawing.

42. "Number" style: listing the number of stamps on a stamp-sheet, and nothing more (the stamps themselves are not seen). Listing the number of words in a letter, but let the receiver guess (what could be written); this is useful.

Yeysk, USSR, 1988–1989

* * * * * *

(Ed. note:) The dissolution of the Soviet Union had not occurred in 1989 when this text was written by the author for *Eternal Network*.



Figure 132. Henning Mittendorf, *Decentralized Mail Art Congress*, Germany, 1992. Rubber Stamp Print.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 38

MAIL ART IS HOPE

Henning Mittendorf

Mail artists live and work between the poles of life's profanity and holiness, mastering creative tasks that contribute to a new nature. They find truth in a spirit deeper than the reality of appearances; they possess a spirit of hope in finding identity of self within a harmonic paradigm of primeval wisdom.

Mail artists create within an inclusive world, a symmetrical totality in which all things are bound up together in a gigantic multidimensional net of intelligent, reciprocal actions. These actions are of the highest order in variety, complexity (freedom) and stability. And within this hidden structure of contrasting harmonies, "(wo)man" is a switching-point for understanding the omnipresent connection of spirit and energy.

There are two aspects of society which mail artists perceive. On the one hand, they see all human life and systems, including the official art scene, as the production of commodities that are blocking the holy. Authoritarianism, consumerism and necrophiliac insanity conspire to usurp the place of the holy. Within that paradigm the elites ruin the world with products that are rationalistic catastrophes. On the other hand, mail artists find alternative identities within groups that nurture survival through creative and collaborative exchanges. Creative survival is decisively important to nearly all mail artists and in their realm of multidimensional nets they work and thrive in co-sensibility, co-freedom, cognition, co-reflexion and co-evolution. These networking qualities constitute an immense source of power and are a measure of valuation.

Supported by their net of communication, mail artists risk their personalities to obtain identity. Using full body-and-soul-unity, mail artists are rooted in an energy and spirit-filled totality. Networking requires an intensive, well-balanced capacity to perceive process and develop signals pregnant with multiple possibilities. This demanding process involves the combination of "head" (consciousness) and "belly" (subconsciousness). Direct access to truth is attained in a difficult equilibrium beyond the objective domain of consciousness. By surpassing objective thinking, the separation of subject and object is suspended and truth emerges. Within this "supra-consciousness," spirit incarnates and masters reality in a new-work, new-life, new-nature. If other interaction partners are involved with this process of new-nature, they are included in the equilibrium and its new sight of things. The culmination of these reciprocal effects in networks of mail art exchange can become an effective, ever-changing ferment, hormone or catalyst for communicative enlightenment.

The mail artist widens self-awareness by steady, reciprocal work, appropriation, accommodation and transformation of time. Power of judgment, common sense, productivity, ability to organize and symbol-creativity improve. With this heightened clarity of purpose, mail artists can pillory the one-sided abuse of rationalism, determinism and functionalism. Together, the mail art community can regain totality's other side: qualities where rationalism is only a speciality. Mail artists can stop, perhaps invert the ongoing loss of reality before it splinters into nothingness.

Beyond completing, perfecting, purifying, and interpreting life, mail artists are themselves reciprocal effects within life. They balance a new symmetry between the profane and holy which contributes to the evolution of a new nature. Within a freely chosen net, the Eternal Net of mail art, mail artists defy modern systems of information and traffic that are insanely blind to human survival. Mail artists can actively create a multidimensional and open new-nature; an island of life within the chaos of death. Mail art can be a symbolic bearer of hope for the humanization of global culture. United, mail artists are vital, reciprocal effects within an evolving, intelligent whole!



Figure 133. Henning Mittendorf, *Mail Art Seals*, Germany, 1992. Handcarved Rubber Stamps.

CHAPTER 39
ART AS TELEPATHY, MEETING AND (SPI)RITUAL

Andrej Tisma

Mail art and correspondence art are just stages in the development of a non-material art in which the work itself is not important as the artist behind the work. It is communication, an exchange of creative energy between artists. It works with the human psyche. Since I defined mail art as a "pulsating spiritual sculpture" (1985), I have been especially interested in working with the human psyche as artistic material.

It is only by temporary necessity that the exchange of mail art takes place via the postal system and other material and electronic means of carrying messages. True exchange will consist of the direct transmission of inspiration from artist to recipient, and subsequent feedback.

Since 1984, I've been taking part in the series of Andrzej Dudak – Dürer's projects under the title Metaphysical Telepathic Project, and from the beginning I felt that there was something different in it compared with the rest of the mail art network. Maybe that was an important impulse for my later research in the art of meeting (meet-art) since 1985, and of spiritual art.

Andrzej Dudek, Polish mail artist and performance artist, claimed to be the reincarnation of the famous Renaissance painter Albrecht Dürer, and year by year he was asking us, the members of the mail art network, to take part in his projects, dedicated to the anniversary of Dürer's birth (21st of May). We were asked to do something as an homage to Dürer on the exact day and hour of Dürer's birth, and to send Andrzej Dudek the documentation of our act. It was obvious that the aim of the project wasn't documentation, but rather the action that was happening all over the world at the same time. Metaphysics and telepathy were on the scene during these two or three hours and that was the main content of the "exhibitions" that Dudek had organized as homage to Dürer.

In May 1987, while on my tour in the U.S.A., I remember carrying Dudek's invitation for his Metaphysical Telepathic Project, having in mind to do something for him wherever I happened to be. So it happened in Philadelphia, where I had organized a meeting with several mail artists from that area (Des McLean, Sheila Holtz, and James Webster, Jr.) in the Commissary restaurant, where we all made an artwork together for Dudek in Poland between 5 and 8 p.m. We made a collage with rubber-stamps, stickers, and texts, but our real work was our telepathic connection with Düdek, and through him, with Dürer, and all the participants of the project from all over the world who were doing the same thing at the same time.

A similar thing is happening during the meeting of artists. Exchange of their mind and spiritual potential is going on while they are talking about art, showing each other their works or working together in a collaboration. It is happening more directly and intensively than in telepathy at long distance, because more senses are included, proving the telepathic connection, enabling participants to react faster and more directly.

In 1985, I began to consider my meetings with artists themselves to be works of art of artistic acts (meet-art). Producing original rubber-stamps, I immortalized numerous meetings with artists, and now experience each imprint of these stamps as an evocation of the meeting it commemorates—i.e., as a new artistic act. Together with these meetings, I also began to do performances by which

I hoped to directly affect people's spirits. My performance entitled *love* (1984) already constituted an attempt through telepathy and magic to transmit love to the entire world (aided by a map of the world). In New York (1987), I imprinted my rubber-stamp messages on people in the street, hoping to leave my mental stamp on them. With a series of similar performances (or interactions), in which I use conversation, lecture, distribution of printed matter and imprinting of stamps on viewers' bodies, I strive to imbue them with inspiration and enlightenment. I call my activities (spi)rituals—rituals of spiritual exchange. This is non-material art which is intended neither for the senses (like the fine arts), nor the intellect (like conceptual art). It is directed at the human spirit and its great potential, now more-or-less dormant, which needs to be awakened. Just as a sculptor shapes clay, I want my art to make use of the human spirit, that inexhaustible substance, which when handled intelligently can be shaped, guided, expanded and absorbed. The ultimate artistic work is inspiration itself, that pure feeling of enlightenment and cleansing. It touches the meaning of existence, which, after all, is what all art strives for, except that here the path is shorter and effects direct, since there is no object as an intermediary.

My latest (spi)rituals consist of attempts to transfer spirit to artistically uninteresting objects and materials (pieces of paper, water, rock, etc.), that I mail or distribute in some other way, and which are supposed to radiate my inspiration to the recipient. I also carry out actions in a natural setting, sending out my positive spirituality to the surrounding world.

All these things as spiritual exchanges, inspiration, and telepathy are forms of the future non-material art which is now coming into sight in different parts of the world, and will be established in the next millennium.



Figure 134. Andrej Tisma's (SPI)RITUAL, Performance at Sr. Karlovci, Yugoslavia, November 27, 1990. Tisma appears at far left of photograph.

ETERNAL NETWORK

CHAPTER 40

NETWORK COMMUNION: THE SOLID INGREDIENT

Carlo Pittore

On a stormy Sunday morning, my sixteen-foot motor boat,—the one that I use to run the river,—sank. Because of a succession of mounting problems, from losing my painting studio and a cessation from painting to new studio construction that has stalled, to a case of itchy poison ivy inflammation, and the rupturing of a relationship with a friend, I saw the sinking of the boat as a metaphor for my life.

In the afternoon, the river people gathered at the town landing to salvage my boat. They hauled it to shore, righted it, pulled it out, refloated it, repaired my motor, dried the spark plugs and saw me through to a complete renewal.

It is a quiet exhilaration to have survived, and not on one's own merits, but because of the love and the knowledge of the community. My vessel seaworthy once again, I am ready to go by way of Cathause River into Merrymeeting Bay.

In Art, is our major concern the conception? the creation? or the reception?

In my correspondence, I have not always shared myself as the ideal of my mail art buddy, Michel Champendal of Paris, who says, "True hearts and clear spirits is all mail art needs."

> What is inspiration?
> Give me your spit, sagepoet.
> From where come the sparks to ignite?
> What is it that I need to unite?

Sometimes when I am physically alone, I am in communion with you. If I am only me and alone, is not art as nothing? Is it the thinking or dreaming of you that establishes communion? What is it that unites us?

When the great sparks occur between the two of us, amongst the lot of us, there is communication between you and me. But it is greater than communication between you and me. For we share community. It is communion. It is red and green.

If all correspondence is between one time and another, is it not like riding on opposite sides of the same plank balanced in the middle, so that one end goes up, as the other goes down? For each of us, it is see/saw. We alternate. We send out. We receive. We hear. We reply. I know, somehow, that we meet in the instant of the present, in the space between the see and the saw, and the here and the heard. In communion!

There are many who hear the songs of the summer birds. I cherish the sounds of the familiar, and welcome the new. From my round, wooden hut in the woods, from the river and the little village where I live, this hoped-for communion with you keeps me alive and refreshed.

Art is as young and possible as ever! The network is eternal!

APPENDIXES

1 Contributing Essayists
2 Essayists' Mail Art Addresses
3 Mail Art Shows, 1970-1992
4 Mail Art Archives and Collections
5 Mail Art Magazines
6 Networker Databank

Appendix 1
CONTRIBUTING ESSAYISTS

Anna Banana, active in mail art since 1971, is editor of the *Banana Rag* newsletter (1971–1990), and *Vile Magazine* (1974–1983). She edits the artistamp publication *International Art Post*, and *Artistamp News.*

Vittore Baroni, author, music critic, and mail art editor of *Arte Postale!* He has been a prolific contributor to mail art, alternative media projects, and artist zines since 1977.

Rosemary Gahlinger-Beaune is a communications artist and author of two non-fiction books, *Canadian Artist Survival Manual*, and *Not for Profit, You Say!* She is presently acting as a consultant and is doing research for a new book entitled *Artistamps of the World.*

Guy Bleus is a Belgian mail art theorist and performance artist who directs an extensive mail art archive The Administration Centre. His writings on mail art and networking subjects appear in many international magazines, catalogues, and books.

Tom Cassidy, a.k.a. Musicmaster is a performance artist who has been active in mail art since 1972. He has authored a series of mail art profiles entitled *Notes of a Basement Dweller*. He produced a comic strip, *Dr. Mail & Zip the Muse*, in the late 1980s, and recently created a collaborative booklet, *Wood Nymphs of the Sahara*, that features mail art and smallpress artists.

David Cole is a visual poet and correspondence artist who co-curated the first New York City visual and concrete poetry show in 1975. He organized The Scroll Unrolls (1985) at the Janco-Dada Museum in Ein-Hod, Israel, with over 800 participants, and curated an entirely collaborative exhibition, Within the Turning (1989).

Mark Corroto and Melinda Otto. Mark Corroto is a graduate of Ohio State University and DePaul University. Known in the mail art network as FaGaGaGa, Corroto began his mail activity in 1982. He has organized two mail art shows Mr. X (1987), and Jazz: Past/Future (1990). Melinda Otto is a student of literature at Youngstown State University. Melinda Otto and her husband Mark Corroto traveled to Leningrad in 1991 to organize Detective/Mail Art Against Terrorism.

Sheril Cunning organized the first mail art exhibition in San Diego county at Palomar College in 1978. She is the author of *Handmade Paper* and creator of numerous collaborative artists' books.

Chris Dodge and Jan DeSirey, known through the mail art network as DeSirey Dodge Peace Post, edit and publish the *Minnesota Social Responsibilities Round Table Newsletter.*

Charles Francois, a sociologist working as Training Manager for Apple Macintosh, has been active in mail art since 1982. He created the host system RATOS in 1989 and dedicated it entirely to mail art, communication aesthetics, and networking.

Joachim Frank is a scientist, writer, visual and conceptual artist living in Albany, New York. Frank's scientific work involves processing images by computer.

He has co-edited *Chair Book*, an anthology of artworks by Christo, Rauschenberg, Beuys, Warhol, and others that have the chair as their subject.

H.R. Fricker is a contextual artist and the creator of mail art's first ism, "Tourism." He and fellow Swiss mail artist Günther Ruch organized The Decentralized World-Wide Mail Art Congress, 1986. His highly successful Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress, 1992 was first presented as an essay for *Eternal Network.*

Ken Friedman became the youngest member of the classic Fluxus group at the age of sixteen, when Wolf Vostell dubbed him "Der Fluxus Mozart." Between 1966 and 1975, he was the director of Fluxus West. Friedman divides his time between a studio in New York and an office in Oslo, Norway, where he directs planning projects for government and industry.

Coco Gordon is an Italian-born intermedia artist and poet. Her recent Italian solo show, Il Sogno Del Tempo at Messina's Padiglione, featured twenty-six installations as meditations calling awareness to our ecozoic age. She has published three books of poetry and twelve artists' books in editions.

Ayun Halliday is a performance artist and mail artist living in Chicago. She has been an ensemble member of the Neo-Futurists, creators of Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind.

John Held, Jr., a Fine Arts Librarian at the Dallas Public Library, has written numerous articles on mail art including rubber stamp art, performance art, and other marginal artforms. He authored *Mail Art: An Annotated Bibliography* in 1991.

Dick Higgins is a Fluxus poet, performance artist, playwright, scholar, composer, publisher, musician, painter and filmmaker whose numerous theoretical essays pertaining to intermedia are major contributions to networking art. From 1964–1974 Higgins directed Something Else Press, an experimental, innovative publishing house that brought numerous avant-garde ideas to surface.

Judith A. Hoffberg, a librarian, archivist, lecturer, editor, publisher, art critic and consultant, maintains strong links with the mail art network as an active participant and as publisher of the newsletter *Umbrella.* Based in California, she travels the world lecturing on artists' books and curating exhibitions of them.

Stewart Home, author of *The Assault On Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (1988), and *Pure Mania* (1989), has organized Festivals of Plagiarism in London and Glasgow. He recently authored *Neoist Manifestos—The Art Strike Papers.*

J.P. Jacob, editor of the mail art magazine *PostHype* (1981–1986), is an artist, curator and writer who has worked extensively with Soviet, Central, and Eastern European artists to develop such exhibitions as Out of Eastern Europe: Private Photography (1986), and The Missing Picture: Contemporary Alternative Photography from the Soviet Union (1990) for the List Visual Arts Center at MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Leavenworth Jackson is an artist, illustrator, rubber-stamp enthusiast, gardener, and Zen feminist currently living in Berkeley, California. Her global meanderings through the mail art network have spanned twelve years.

Richard Kostelanetz is an artist, writer, and composer living in New York City, where he was born in 1940. He is the author of numerous books including *The Old Poetries and the New* (1980), *Metamorphosis in the Arts* (1980), and other works of literary criticism. Among his books for 1991 include *On Innovative Art(ist)s* and *Politics in the Afro-American Novel*.

Willie Marlowe is a painter, visual poet and art professor at Sage Junior College of Albany, Albany, New York. Active in mail art since 1984, she has curated several mail art shows including Stamp Act (1987), Pony Express (1988), Mail Art Blues (1990), and Habitats and Shelters (1993).

Graciela Marx, an Argentine mail and performance artist, has edited *Hoje-Hoja-Hoy*, a publication of the Association of Latin American and Caribbean Artists. Some of her marginal artworks and performances are humble rituals performed anonymously, as in her *Testimony of Our First Sowing in the Water* (1983), and *Global Marginal Ceremony* (1990).

Peter R. Meyer is a Swedish film/TV director employed at Sveriges Radio in Stockholm. Meyer's numerous audio/video art programs, TV documentaries, and films include interviews with John Cage and many contemporary Fluxus artists. Among Meyer's writings devoted to audio art is his recent book, *Ljudkonst* (1993). His notable media productions include *Night Exercise*, *Hyland*, *Shivonne*, *Step One to Sweden*, and *Chambre Separe*.

Estera Milman is the founder and director of Alternative Traditions in the History of Contemporary Art at University of Iowa School of Art and Art History, Iowa City, Iowa. As associate director of the Program for Modern Studies, she has been placing mail art in the framework of historical concerns running from Dada through Fluxus and to other contemporary forms. Among many books she has written and edited are *Fluxus and Friends: Selections from the Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Collection* and *Art Networks and Information Systems: A Source Book and Miscellany.*

Henning Mittendorf is a German stamp artist, philosopher, and mystic who has been an active mail artist since 1980. His collage, rubber stamp seals, and intricate, linear dry-point etchings reveal a fascination with mystical symbolism and art as process.

MIT Mitropoulos is a Greek telecommunications consultant, environmental artist, and researcher. He organized the first mail art show in Greece (Athens and Thessaloniki, 1980) at the French Institute as an homage to Manet's *Olympia*. He is a member of the Scientific Council of IDATE, France, and of the World Society of EKISTICS.

Rea Nikonova was born in the Krasnodar region in Russia during the 1942 German occupation. A prolific visual poet, painter and performance artist, she has emerged as one of the most significant and influential mail art activists in Russia. Nikonova and her husband, Serge Segay, have organized several pioneering mail art exhibitions including Scare-crow (Summer 1989), which evoked responses from nearly 100 participants from 23 countries.

Ayah Okwabi studied communication at the University of Legon, Ghana and serves today as chief sub-editor at the foreign desk of the Ghana News Agency. His numerous articles about mail art have appeared in the *African Arts, Culture & Entertainment Monthly*, *Uhuru Magazine,* and in the *Spectator*. Okwabi's mail art shows, combining local and Pan-African themes, include Africa Arise, Food for the Hungry, and Proverbs.

Clemente Padin, a prominent performance, video, and mail artist from Montevideo, Uruguay, has edited the magazines, *Los Huevos del Plata* (1966), *Ovum 10* (1969), and *Participacion* (1984). He has curated numerous mail art exhibitions and performance events in Montevideo, including Latin American Street Art Festival (1990).

Pawel Petasz is a Polish painter and visual poet. He attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdansk and has been an active force in international mail art since 1975. Petasz is renowned in mail art for the creation of *Commonpress Magazine*, a democratic, open forum founded in December 1977.

Clive Phillpot is Director of the Library of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. He has written extensively about publications by artists in such magazines as *Artforum*, *Art Journal*, *Print Collector's Newsletter*, and *Studio International*. He contributed to *Artists' Books*, edited by Joan Lyons (1985), and was co-editor of *The Art Press* (1976), and *Fluxus* (1988).

Carlo Pittore has been active in international mail art since 1978. His New York City studio served as the hub for many international mail artist exhibitions and happenings. La Galleria dell' Occhio (1980–87), Pittore's East Village window gallery at 267 East 10th Street, exhibited more than a thousand mail artists in group and solo shows. Besides publishing *Me Magazine* (1980–86), and *The Post Me Stamp Series* (1981–present), Pittore is a dedicated painter and draftsman.

Bern Porter is a scientist, visual poet, performance artist, and publisher who lives in Belfast, Maine where he runs a forty-acre estate known as The Institute of Advanced Thinking. Porter has conversed with such leading philosophers, artists, and scientists of our century as Gertrude Stein, James Joyce and Albert Einstein, and was the first American publisher to print Henry Miller's prose. In 1945 Porter worked on the Manhattan Project.

Marilyn R. Rosenberg is a correspondence artist whose visual poetry and artists' bookworks are in a wide variety of university and museum library collections, including the Houghton Library, Harvard University, and Sherman Library, Dartmouth College.

Shozo Shimamoto is a founding member of the Japanese artists' group Gutai, and is a pioneering performance artist. Shimamoto has exhibited and performed at the Pompidou Centre in Paris (1986), and performed at the Gutai Exhibition in Madrid, Spain (1985). He is a professor at Kyoto Educational University and mayor of Ryujin Village, Wakayama prefecture.

Andrej Tisma is a Yugoslavian art critic, curator, and artist who has been active in many intermedia projects including solo performance and concrete and visual poetry. Among his mail art projects are *Mail Art Olympic Games* (1984), *Private Life* (1986), and *AIDS & Paradise* (1987). His published art criticism and essays have appeared in numerous magazines in Yugoslavia, France, Italy and the United States.

Ed Varney is a Canadian poet, critic, editor, and mail artist who has published numerous Canadian writers under the imprint of Intermedia Press. His most recent book of poetry, *What the Wind Said*, was published by the Caitlin Press.

Chuck Welch, a.k.a. Crackerjack Kid is a curator, lecturer, writer, publicist, and mail art networker living in Hanover, New Hampshire. A mail artist since 1978, he was awarded a Fulbright Hayes Grant (1976) and an NEA Hilda Maehling Fellowship (1981). He has written *Networking Currents: Contemporary Mail Art Subjects and Issues* (1986) and edits his mail art magazine *Netshaker*.

Appendix 2

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The editor of *Eternal Network* has included current mailing addresses of all contributing essayists to encourage interaction with the international mail art network. For various reasons of time, interest, or energy, newcomers to mail art should not expect returns from every mail artist contacted. The following address list includes phone and fax numbers when permission was given by the essayist. Electronic mail addresses were also given where applicable.

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ETERNAL NETWORK

Appendix 3
MAIL ART SHOWS: 1970–1994

This list of mail art shows was compiled from the approximately 1,200 exhibitions documented in John Held's *International Artist Cooperation: Mail Art Shows, 1970–1985*, from issues of *Rubberstampmadness*, *National Stampagraphic*, Guy Bleus' Administration Centre Archive, and from the Eternal Network Archive of Crackerjack Kid. The momentum of mail art exhibitions continued unabated since the last entries of 1985 were noted in John Held's sourcebook for mail art shows. In the February 1991 issue of *ND Magazine* there were fifty listings of international mail art shows and projects, which is testament to the continued popularity of mail art.

Mail art show listings include title of exhibition, location, and name of sponsor/organizer, if available. Selections of mail art shows were not based solely upon the importance of landmark exhibitions; rather, a wide range of criteria was chosen to emphasize diversity of show themes, mail art subjects, international locale, art media, and private, public or institutional sponsors. These entries are a sampling of many notable exhibitions. Not included are hundreds of international mail art projects that are centered on an individual's networking call for participation in collaborative publications, audio/video compilations, teleconferencing, conceptual performances, and events beyond the exhibition of mailed art for public or private viewing.

1970

Mail In–Mail Out
Southern Illinois University; Carbondale, Illinois
Lowell Darling and Sonia Landy Sheridan

New York Correspondance School Show
Whitney Museum of American Art; New York, New York
Ray Johnson and Marcia Tucker

1971

Multi Media
San Francisco Art Institute; San Francisco, California

Mail Art
VII Biennale de Paris; Paris, France
Jean-Marc Poinsot

Image Bank Postcard Show
Western Front; Vancouver, Canada
Michael Morris, Vincent Trasov and others

1972

Fluxshoe
Seven-city tour in England
Fluxus West in England
David Mayor, Mike Weaver, Feline Ehrenberg and others

Exposicion Exhaustive de la Nueva Poesia
Galeria U; Montevideo, Uruguay
Enrique Gomez

One Year–One Man Show
Oakland Museum; Oakland, California
Ken Friedman

1973

Art in the Matchbox
Pocket Museum of Modern Art,
Friedrichsfehn, W. Germany
Klaus Groh

Omaha Flow Systems
Joslyn Art Museum; Omaha, Nebraska
Ken Friedman

The First International Quickkopy Mail Art Festival
Stedelijk Museum; Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Dadaland and TNWMV

1974

Artists' Stamps and Stamp Images
Simon Fraser University; Burnaby, Canada
James Felter

Buddha University Correspondence Show
Western Illinois University; Macomb, Illinois
Ray Johnson

Art Communication Mariginale
Ecart Gallery; Geneva, Switzerland
Herve Fischer

Festival de la Postal Creativa
Galeria U.; Montevideo, Uruguay
Clemente Padin

1975

Artists' Postcards
Other Books and So; Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Ulises Carrion

First Ever Mail Art Show in South Africa
The Space; Capetown, South Africa
Dynamite Dave

Primeria Internacional de Correspondencia
Sao Paulo, Brazil
Santo Andre and Isamel Assumpao

Exposicao Internacional de Arte Postal
Recife, Brazil
Paulo Bruscky and Ypiranga Filho

1976

Correspondence, An Exhibition of the Letters of Ray Johnson
North Carolina Museum of Art; Raleigh, North Carolina
Moussa Domit and Richard Craven

International Exhibition of Art
Post Office Building; Recife, Brazil
Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago

Resumes/Curriculum Vitae/Biographies
Parachute Center; Calgary, Canada
Don Mabie

Timbres and Tampons d'Artistes
Cabinet des Estampes; Geneva, Switzerland

1977

Art Documentation '77
Shiyuoka Pref. Exhibition Space; Japan
Tohei Horuke

In the Circle '77
Uniart Gallery; Elblag, Poland
Pawel Petasz and Miroslaw Wrobel

2nd International Postage Stamp Exhibition
Intermedia; Vancouver, Canada
Edwin Varney

1978

Apropos/Audio Art Cassette Show
Apropos; Lucerne, Switzerland
Ruedi Schill

Artwords and Bookworks
Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art; Los Angeles, California
Judith Hoffberg and Joan Hugo

Assembling Assembling
Pratt Graphics Center Gallery; New York, New York
Richard Kostelanetz and Henry James Korn

First International New Dada Exposition
Galerie S.; Lund, Sweden
Jean Sellum

1979

Art and Correspondence from the Western Front
Western Front; Vancouver, Canada
Kate Craig, Glenn Lewis, Eric Metcalf, Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov

Mail Etc., Art
University of Colorado. Boulder, Colorado; Southern Illinois University. Edwardsville, Illinois; Tyler School of Art. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Florida State University. Tallahassee, Florida
Jean Edith Weiffenback, Bonnie Donahue, Ed Koslow and others

Postman Always Rings Twice/Test The Post Office
Santa Monica City College
Lon Spiegelman and Don Emery

1980

Everywhere in Chains
Postcard Preservation Society; Dubbo, Australia
Tane Burns

Void Show
Workspace Loft Inc; Albany, New York
Joachim Frank

Gallery Between the Staircases
Currier Gallery of Art; Manchester, New Hampshire
Robert Saunders

1981

Material Metamorphosis: International Mail Art Exhibition
Bellevue College; Bellevue, Nebraska
Crackerjack Kid

Artists' Postage Stamps
Happy Gallery; Belgrade, Yugoslavia
Miroljub Todorovic

Bern Porter International Mail Art Exhibition
La Galleria dell' Occhio; New York, New York
Carlo Pittore

1982

Correspondence as Art: An Historical Overview
Art Department Galleries, San Jose State University,
San Jose, California
Michael Crane

The First International Mail Art Show in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia
Wally Darnell

Seoul International Mail Art Exhibition
Growricr Gallery; Seoul, Korea
Kum-Nam Baik

1983

Audio and Mail Art
Moderna Museet; Stockholm, Sweden
Peter Meyer

Fe-Mail Art
Gallery Saloniki; Thessaloniki, Greece
Mirella Bentivoglio

Japan "Art Unidentified" Mail Art
AU. Hyogo; Japan
Shozo Shimamoto

National Women's Music Festival Mail Art Exhibit
Bloomington, Indiana
Becky Siefer

1984

Artistampex
Forest St. Gallery; London, Ontario, Canada
Michael Bidner

International Mail Art Show of the XXIII Olympic Games
Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee,
Los Angeles, California
Robert Fitzpatrick, Hope Tschopik and Gerry Bryant

Thinking of Mail Art: Towards an Information Art
Centro Studi "Pietro Mancini"; Cosenza, Italy
Enzo di Grazia

Inter-Dada '84
16th Note; San Francisco, California
Gail Alien and Donna Mae Shaver

1985

The Scroll Unrolls
Janco-Dada Museum
Einhod, Israel
David Cole

Mail Art: The Postal Collaboration
Museum of Natural History Gallery,
University of Wisconsin. Stevens Point, Wisconsin
Mark J. Spencer

Architecture of a Mailart Museum
Trogen, Switzerland
H.R. Fricker

Artists' Postage Stamps
13th Hour Gallery; New York, New York
E.F. Higgins III, Buster Cleveland

First International Mail Art Show in the People's Republic of China
Wally Darnell

1986

Is There No Justice?
Circle Arts Inc.; New York, New York
Sally Mericle

The Act of Stamping International Mail Art Show
Canadian Correspondence Art Gallery; Calgary, Canada
Don Mabie

World Art Post
Museum of Fine Arts; Budapest, Hungary
Gyorgy and Julia Galantai-Artpool

Decentralized Worldwide Mail-Art Congress
Where two or more people met to discuss personal experiences about networking. Over 80 mail art meetings world-wide.
H.R. Fricker and Günther Ruch

1987

Stamp Images
Museum of Fine Arts; Budapest, Hungary
Geskò Judit

Food for the Hungry
Accra, North Ghana
Ayah Okwabi

First International Bottled Art Exhibition
Recife, Brazil. Exhibition tossed away in Atlantic Ocean
Tarcisio Silva

Corresponding Worlds – Artists' Stamps
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College; Oberlin, Ohio
Harley Francis

1988

Hommage à Joseph Beuys (Travelling Exhibition)
Galerie d'Art Contemporain; La Valette du Var, France
Jean-Noël Laszlo

Container Con Amore
Hengelo, The Netherlands
Jennry de Groot

Hiroshima Peace Sun
Hiroshima, Japan
Ruggero Maggi and Shozo Shimamoto

Dudor Mail Art 1988
Helyi Muvelodesi Otthon Marcelhaza, Czechoslovakia
Juhasz R. Jozsef

Nature Gives Mail Art Show
Novi Sad, Yugoslavia
Andrej Tisma

1989

Coup d'Envois – Ou l'Art à la Lettre
Musee de la Poste; Paris, France
Pierre Restany, Marie-Claude Le Floc'h

Within the Turning
Gallery Judaica, North Shore Jewish Center, Port Jefferson, New York
David Cole

Pony Express International Mail Art Show
Junior College of Albany; Albany, New York
Willie Marlowe

The Bridge Mail Art Project
Pakruojis, Lithuania
Jonas Nekrasius

Mail Art: The Artists from 25 Countries
Yeisk, U.S.S.R.
Serge Segay and Rea Nikonova

1990

What is the Social Responsibility of the Artist: A Letter Opening Performance
American Library Association; Chicago, Illinois
John Held, Jr.

Festival of the Swamps
Madison, Wisconsin
Liz Was, Miekal And, directors of Xexoxial Endarchy

The Locals Show Canadada
National Convention of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Convention Hall; Montreal, Quebec
Michael Duquette

Beuys & Girls
Gal. Monumental, Lisboa, Portugal
José Oliveira

Timbre d'Artistes
Espace Peiresc
Toulon, France

La Posta In Gioco
Uffizi, Florence, Italy
Gianni Broi

1991

Detective Mail Art Show
St. Petersburg, Russia
Oleg Yudin and Mark Corroto

No More Excuses: Human Rights, Now
Montevideo, Uruguay
Amnesty International

Message for Peace by Mail Artists
Kitano International Festival, Kobe, Japan
Shigeru Tamaru

Spaceship Earth: Approaching the Third Millenium
Vancouver, BC, Canada
Museo Internacional de Neu Art

1992

Art Travels, Mail Art Festival
Grand Hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Quebec
National Postal Museum

Decentralized World Wide Networker Congresses 1992
Over 250 international congresses in twenty countries
Congress Facilitators as listed in June 1991 documentation:
H.R. Fricker, Peter W. Kaufmann, Mark Corroto, Chuck Welch, Steve Perkins, Lloyd Dunn, and John Held, Jr.

Send Me Something I Cannot Understand
Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland
Ilkka Juhani Takalo-Eskola

1993

Kings and Queens Mail Art Show
Fresno Art Museum, Fresno, California
Mallory Moad, E.Z. Smith

Multiculturism International Mail Art Exhibition
Bunker Hill Community College
Boston, Massachusetts
Jonathan Stangroom

Divided
Dayton Visual Arts Center, Dayton, Ohio
Yolanda Brown

1994

Mailed Art in Uppsala
Uppsala Tourist Congress
Uppsala, Sweden
Lisen Hessner, Staffan Jonsson, Peter R. Meyer

"Interrelationships" – Open World, Open Mind, Open Art Exhibition
National Foundation of Serbia, Belgrade, Yugoslavia
Mihailo Ristic, Dobrica Kamperelic

ETERNAL NETWORK

Appendix 4

MAIL ART ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

"Art is administration. Administration is Art," according to Guy Bleus, who runs the Administration Centre, an austere, formally arranged archive considered by mail artists to be among the most extensive, diverse collections of mailed artifacts in Europe. Bleus, and more informal mail art "collectors," like Lon Spiegelman (USA) and Michael Leigh (UK), gather mailed artifacts out of fun, habit, or obsession bordering on despair. The purpose for gathering mailed artifacts, however, is often for private perusal rather than public inspection. Clearly, there is no common definition in mail art on which to base any categorical differentiation between archives and collections, and so this appendix recognizes both.

Archives and collections are not necessarily burial grounds for objects and memories; an archive "lives" when it is a tool for exploring communication. When individuals hear and see what they read in print, then books, copy art, graffiti, magazines, posters, stamp art, etc., become animated sources to further communication. Might archives and collections be a stepping stone for correspondence exchange?

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of archive/collections, and each represents an important thread in the network web. Mail art archives reflect the individuality of each mail artist. Clearly, then, no two archives are alike and it is an impossibility to include them all here. This listing is a representative sampling of mail art archives and collections that are "open" by appointment to readers who might be interested in discovering mail art. Archives and collections listed here were chosen for their extensive focus upon a particular medium, for their international location, range of subjects collected, and continued operation for a period not less than ten years. Each listing of a mail art archive or collection in this appendix is based upon the following criteria:

I. Institutions: Libraries, Museums, and Galleries
II. Mail Artist Archives and Collections

1) Name of Archive/Collection
2) Curator
3) Address
4) Description
5) Specialty or Focus
6) Date of founding

Institutional entries listed here are more general than criteria used to describe mail artist archives and collections. Mail art archives in institutions such as the Getty Center's Jean Brown Collection are so extensive that specific criteria cannot convey an accurate purview. When Dutch scholar Eric Vos catalogued ephemera from The Jean Brown Collection, he divided areas of research into four major sections: 1) mail art performance happenings, "special collections," correspondence; 2) preliminary guide to the collection Happenings and Fluxus; 3) mail art, stamp art, and Xerox art; artists' booklets and periodicals;

4) concrete, visual, and sound poetry. Entire mail art shows are included with stamp art and Xerox art shows and projects. While Eric Vos' research is extensive, his study does not represent the entire Jean Brown Collection as it exists to date. New acquisitions of mail artwork are frequently being added to the Jean Brown Collection. Furthermore, other mail art collections are also being gathered by the Getty Center.

Pertinent information about mail art collections in institutions requires thorough, complex research. This appendix represents the first major effort to assist scholars who are now beginning to inquire about mail art collections and archives. Prior listings of mail art archives have been sketchy at best, usually published in small editions of alternative publications. Some educational institutions like Colby College, Waterville, Maine have hosted mail art exhibitions and catalogued entries for their library. Nevertheless, the academic community knows little about mail art, although some important institutions are beginning to seriously inquire. Institutions such as the Getty Center, The University of Iowa Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Archive, and Henie Onstad Museum are emerging as significant, pioneering centers for scholarly research in mail art.

* * * * * *

I. Institutions: Libraries, Museums, and Galleries

1) **Against the Clock Mail Art Show Collection**
2) Hugh Gourley, Director
   Phone: +1 (207) 872.3229
   Fax: +1 (207) 872.3555
3) Colby College Museum of Art
   Colby College
   Waterville, ME 04901
   USA
4) According to Director Hugh Gourley, no show catalogue or other written documentation about this large exhibition exists, although all mail artworks are catalogued at the Colby College Museum of Art
6) Exhibition held April 1–25, 1985; curator: Janet Hawkins

1) **Alternative Traditions In The Contemporary Arts**
2) Estera Milman, Founder/Director
   Phone: +1 (319) 335.1762
   Fax: +1 (319) 335.2951
3) The University of Iowa
   School of Art and Art History
   Iowa City, IA 52242
   USA
4) Conceptual art, correspondence art, multiples, book works, language works, etc. Collections of correspondence art include: Crane/Friedman (collection of originals intended for reproduction in Michael Crane's book *Correspondence Art*; the Steve Durland Collection; the Buster Cleveland Collection; Crackerjack Kid's Networker Databank; among others
5) Works from the post–World War II period that look to the Dada movement as their historical precedent
6) Established in 1980

1) **Artists' Books Collection**
2) Lynne Warren, associate curator, permanent collection
   Phone: +1 (312) 280.2660
3) The Museum of Contemporary Art
   Artists' Books Collection
   237 E. Ontario
   Chicago, IL 60611
   USA
4) Collection is focused on artists' books and includes mail art, artists' recordings, artists' video, fine prints, art documentations, and photographs
6) 1980

1) **Art Metropole**
2) Amy Maggiacomo, Collections Coordinator
   Phone: +1 (416) 367.2304
   Fax: +1 (416) 365.9208
3) Art Metropole
   788 King Street West
   Toronto, Ontario
   Canada M5V 1N6
4) An artist-directed centre that publishes, distributes, collects and exhibits media-related, multiple format works from the 1960s onward. They hold an extensive collection of poster and mail art that is available to the public for research
6) Founded in 1974 by General Idea

1) **Art Unidentified**
2) Shozo Shimamoto, Director
   Phone: +81 (798) 66.18.93
   Fax: +81 (798) 64.57.23
3) Art Unidentified

1–1–10 Koshienguchi
Nishinomiya
Japan

4) Art Unidenitified (AU) is an organization of Japanese contemporary artists whose headquarters are located at Art Space, Nishinomiya, Japan. Mail art works at Art Space are located in the Mail Art Museum. Alongside this space is AU's Mail Art Archive room which contains archival boxes of mail art books, alternative magazines, stampart, postcards, and other intermedia related materials
6) Established 1972

1) **Carlo Pittore Room of International Mail Art**
2) Oyvind Storm Bjerke, Chief Curator; Per Hovdenakk, Director
Phone: +47 (2) 54.30.50
Fax: +47 (2) 54.32.70
3) Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter
1311 Hovikodden
Norway
4) The Carlo Pittore Collection began as the personal archive of Carlo Pittore, the distinguished, controversial focus of much international mail art activity during the 1970s and 1980s. Pittore gave his collection to the Henie Onstad Museum, where it is now in storage during preparation. It will be housed in the museum's Carlo Pittore Room, where it will be available to researchers
5) The collection spans a wide range of mail art materials from correspondence and artifacts to zines and books. At the present moment, the collection is stored archivally, but it has not been catalogued
6) Established in 1987

1) **Circle Arts Inc.**
2) Matty Jankowski
Phone: (718) 338.9546
3) Circle Arts Inc.
1439 Ocean Avenue, #2F
Brooklyn, NY 11230
USA
4) Circle Arts is a non-profit organization whose programs and activities include performance parties, art parades, contributory magazines, collaborative cassette recordings and numerous networking contact lists
5) Circle Arts Archive includes extensive files and materials of correspondence artists. Mail Art video documentations include Is There No Justice Mail Art Show, and Peter Küstermann's *Endless World Art Video*, twenty video cassettes of over 160 mail artist interviews. Circle Art's Neoist News Agency helps circulate news of Monty Cantsin and Karen Eliot performances. Mail art and rubber stamp art workshops are among Circle Arts scheduled events
6) 1981

1) **The Fluxus Collection**
2) Kellen Haak, Registrar Hood Museum of Art
Phone: +1 (603) 646.2808
Fax: +1 (603) 646.1400
3) Hood Museum of Art
Dartmouth College
Hanover, NH 03755
USA
4) The nucleus of this collection was created as a memorial exhibitition to the late George Maciunas. Organized by Hood Museum of Art Director Jan Van der Marc, the collection was devoted to educating students and museum patrons
5) Fluxus relics, kits, publications, artist stamps, photographs, music scores, Fluxinstruments, etc. by Ben Vautier, Robert Filliou, Alison Knowles, Joseph Beuys, George Maciunas, Ken Friedman, Yoko Ono, Dick Higgins, and numerous other Fluxus artists. A portion of the collection includes mail art works by Ray Johnson, E.F. Higgins III, Musicmaster, Crackerjack Kid, Richard C., and Stuart Horn
6) 1979

1) **Franklin Furnace Archive**
2) Michael Katchen, Director of Collections
Phone: +1 (212) 925.4671
Fax: +1 (212) 925.0903
3) Franklin Furnace Archive
112 Franklin Street
New York, NY 10013
USA
4) The mail art collection at Franklin Furnace is focused on materials sent to the 1984 Mail Art Then and Now Mail Art International Show
6) Established in 1984 and now as part of the collection of the Library, Museum of Modern Art

1) **The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection**
2) Jon Hendricks, Curator
Phone: +1 (212) 925.4697 or +1 (313) 353.5242
3) 488 Greenwich Street
New York, NY 10013
U.S.A.
or
24321 Mullberry Court
Southfield, MI 48034
U.S.A.
4) The collection is devoted solely to the Fluxus art movement and consists of documentation and objects. The Silverman Collection has major holdings of George Maciunas produced Fluxus Editions and primary documentation of the movement. It is presently open to scholars on a very limited basis. Each written request will be considered based on area of study and availability of material elsewhere.
5) In a letter Jon Hendricks, Curator, provided the following

description: "Many Fluxus artists have in one way or another been involved in aspects of 'mail art'. For instance: George Brecht and Robert Watts' *Delivery Events*; Nam June Paik's *Monthly Review*...; Mieko Shiomi's *Spatial Poems*; Yoko Ono's *Draw Circle Event*; and La Monte Young's *Mailed Scores*. Some of these are listed in the four catalogues of the Collection, *Fluxus etc.*, *Fluxus etc., Addenda I*; *Fluxus etc., Addenda II*; and *Fluxus, Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*; also the *Fluxus Codex* is a useful tool. There are stamps of Robert Watts, George Maciunas, etc., and rubber stamps of Robert Watts, George Brecht, Ben Vautier, Yoko Ono, Addi Koepcke, James Riddle, Ken Friedman, etc.

1) **Independent Press Archive**
2) John Rudy, coordinator/research center
Phone: +1 (716).442.8676
3) Visual Studies Workshop
31 Prince Street
Rochester, NY 14607
USA
4) Archive contains some mail art, but is primarily devoted to artists' books. Presently, there are 4,000–5,000 books including artists' magazines, one-of-a-kind artists' books, and artists' book multiples.
6) 1972

1) **The Jean Brown Collection—A Repository of Post-war Avant-Garde Art in the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities**
2) Gene Waddell, curator, Special Collections Department
Phone: +1 (213) 458.9811
Fax: +1 (213) 458.6487
3) The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities
401 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 400
Santa Monica, CA 90401
USA
4) In Jean Brown's quotation from an undated "Announcement" regarding her collection, the following passage appeared: "The Archive Jean Brown is the repository of original material covering abroad range of contemporary international art. One part of the Archive is devoted to recent avant-garde books, multiples and periodicals, with emphasis on Lettrisme, Concrete Poetry and experimental publishers such as The Something Else Press... The second section contains documents, publications and memorabilia of Fluxus and Happenings in the United States and Europe. A third division of the archive covers Pop Art and Conceptual Art."
6) 1954

1) **The Joan Flasch Artists' Books Collection**
2) Sally Alatalo, Keeper
Phone: (312) 899.5098
3) School of the Art Institute of Chicago
The John M. Flaxman Library, 6th Floor
37 South Wabash
Chicago, IL 60603
USA
4) Collects artists' books, mail art, rubber stamp art, artists' recordings associated to a book format, reference materials, and catalogues of book exhibitions.
5) Specializes in artists' books; 2,500 books. Among several boxes of mail art are works by Ulises Carrion, Vittore Baroni, Crackerjack Kid, and editions from Pawel Petasz' *Commonpress*. There are examples of correspondence art, rubber stamps, postcards, and artistamps. Several (anonymous) mail artists have donated entire collections to the Joan Flasch Artists' Books Collection.
6) 1970

1) **Milan Art Center**
2) Ruggero Maggi
Phone: +39 (2) 349.1947
Fax: +39 (2) 349.1947
3) Milan Art Center
Via Dell'Aprica 2
20158 Milano
Italy
4) Approximately 1,000 items about the Shadow Project and various other works about peace. Other mail art objects include three-dimensional works: bottles, playing cards, masks, etc.
5) Object books, artists' books
6) 1973

1) **Morris/Trasov Archive**
2) Scott Watson, curator
Phone: +1 (604) 822.2759
Fax: +1 (604) 822.9003
3) Fine Arts Gallery
University of British Columbia
1956 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC
Canada V6T 1Y3
4) The archive of Canadian artists Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov is the largest collection of mail art and related correspondence in Canada, as well as an important record of avant-garde activity in Canada and abroad during the 1970s. During an artist-in-residence program in the Art Studio at The Banff Centre (Fall 1990), work on the archive included the accessioning and conservation of the collection, as well as the conceptualization of a catalogue data base. It can now be contained in a running space of some fifty meters
5) Archive includes: *Image Bank (1968–1978)*; *Mr. Peanut Archive (1969–1974)*; *Babyland Colour Bar Research*

Project (1972–1974); *Cultural Ecology Project (1972)*; *Art's Birthday—The Decca Dance (1974)*; *Image Bank Exchange Directories (1972–1974)*
6) 1968

1) **The Museum of Modern Art Library Special Collection**
2) Clive Phillpot, Director of the Library
   Phone: +1 (212) 708.9431
   Fax: +1 (212) 708.9889
3) Museum of Modern Art
   11 West 53 Street
   New York, NY
   USA
4) Scope reflects upon museum collections plus most media. Library includes books, magazines, manuscripts, audio/video tapes, pamphlets, 100,000 exhibition catalogs
5) Special Collections include: Dada and Surrealist publications; Latin American publications; books and magazines by artists, among which are mail artists; documents of the avant-garde, etc.
6) 1929

1) **National Art Library**
2) Jan van der Wateren, Chief Librarian and Curator
   Phone: +44 (71) 938.8315
   Fax: +44 (71) 938.8461
3) National Art Library
   Victoria and Albert Museum
   South Kensington
   London SW7 2RL
   United Kingdom
4) The National Art Library is the national centre for the documentation of art, craft and design, and contains over a million items on the fine, decorative and applied arts. As one of the world's foremost libraries in this subject area it acquires research materials of many kinds and has particular responsibility for collecting and curating the art, craft and design of the book as object
5) Mail art, mail art magazines, reference works and exhibition catalogues, Concrete poetry, copier art, artists' books, book art, *Smile Magazine* and ephemera collection, Neoist publications, Plagiarism, Artists' manifestos, Punk fanzines, Coracle Press archive, Stephen Willats' printed archive, underground magazines and comics, Art Strike (1990–1993) material, and Situationist/pro-Situationist publications. The library also has information files containing press cuttings, letters and ephemera on individuals and institutions involved in these subject areas
6) 1837

1) **National Postal Museum**
2) Chantal Amyot, curator
   Phone: +1 (819) 776.8200
   Fax: +1 (819) 776.8300
3) National Postal Museum
   100 Laurier Street
   PO Box 3100, Station B
   Hull, Quebec
   Canada 78X 4H2
4) The National Postal Museum collection is comprised of more than 1,200 multi-pieced items. The majority was collected by Canadian mail artist Sarah Jackson during the International Mail/Copier Art Exhibition in 1985 and then donated to the National Postal Museum. Many pieces were also gathered during the Mail Art Festival held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 1992
5) copier art
6) 1985

1) **Pacific Northwest Artistamp Collective**
2) Sam Davidson and James Felter, curators
   Phone: +1 (206) 624.7684
3) Davidson Galleries
   313 Occidental Avenue S.
   Seattle, WA 98104
   USA
4) Forty-five international mail art and stamp artists are represented in this collection of artistamps. stamps and stampsheets are placed in a cabinet of drawers for public viewing. Beginning in December 1989 Davidson Galleries held its first international Artistamp exhibition. In 1990 a decision was made to sponsor international Artistamp exhibitions every two years
5) According to collection curator James Warren Felter, artistamps focus on these criteria: "Perforated images without the 'look and feel' of postage stamps as well as Poster stamps, Charity stamps and other recognized philatelic areas have been excluded as they are not true Artistamps; i.e., pseudo–postage stamps instigated and created by artists for themselves, their friends, and their patrons." (From the catalogue introduction of the *2nd International Artistamp Biennial 1991*)
6) Davidson Gallery's Pacific Northwest Artistamp Collective was formed in 1990

1) **PTT-Museum Bern, Mail-art Sammlung**
2) Karl Kronig, curator of mail-art archive
   Phone: +41 (31) 62.61.72
   Fax: +41 (31) 62.39.27
3) PTT-Museum Bern
   Helvetiastrasse 16
   CH–3000, Bern 6
   Switzerland
4) The Swiss PTT-Museum collects stamps, rubber stamps, envelopes, and mail-art documents that are related to Swiss mail artists. For reasons of documentation, however, they also collect significant objects of international mail artists
6) Founded in January 1992

1) **Xexoxial Endarchy, Ltd.**
2) Elizabeth Was and Miekal And, Directors
Phone: +1 (608) 528.4619
3) Xexoxial Endarchy
Route 1, Box 131
LaFarge, WI 53649–9601
USA
4) A non-profit, artist-run, multi-arts organization devoted to the distribution and support of, and education about new experimental arts. Xexoxial Endarchy, according to Miekal And, "offers access to artist space, land, information, artist-made books, cassettes, floppies, video's, musical instruments and other artifacts of a culture that has yet to be invented."
5) Accent on networking and HyperMedia where media intersect
6) 1980

II. Mail Artist Archives and Collections

1) **The Administration Centre**
2) Guy Bleus
Fax: +32 (12) 74.14.15
3) P.O. Box 43
3830 Wellen
Belgium
4) Over 2,000 networkers from over fifty countries are represented in the archive
5) The Administration Center archive focuses on all categories of mail art media and is divided into separate units: artistamps, artists' books, artpaper, assemblings, audio-art, catalogues, computer art, copy art, fax art, graffiti, magazines, mail art, performances, postcards, posters, rubber stamp art, small press publications, video art, visual poetry, etc.
6) 1978

1) **Aleatory Archive**
2) Marcello Diotallevi
Fax: L'Eliorapida, +39 (721) 80.44.51
3) Via Veneto, 59
61032 Fano PS
Italy

1) **Archive of Terra Candella**
2) Harley
Phone: +1 (415) 441.8761
3) PO Box 170579
San Francisco, CA 94117
USA
4) International collection of mail art from over 1,000 artists
5) Emphasis on artistamps
6) 1975

1) **The Archives Art Information Centre**
2) Peter van Beveren
Phone: +31 (10) 476.4472
3) P.O. Box 2577
3000 CN Rotterdam
The Netherlands
4) A non-profit organization collecting information on contemporary art. The mail art materials are dated from the late 1960s to present
5) Specialize in documents as announcement cards, posters, artists books, catalogues, multiples and ephemera
6) 1972

1) **Archive Um**
2) Piotr Rypson
Phone: +48 (22) 33.6995
3) PO Box 796
00–950 Warsaw
Poland
4) Avante garde books and magazines; artists' books, mail art; visual poetry, audio art; ca. 1,000 items
5) Visual poetry and book art
6) 1978

1) **Artistamps of the World**
2) Rosemary Gahlinger-Beaune
Phone: +1 (604) 439.1915
3) Box 553
Lucan, Ontario
Canada NOM 2JO
4) A collection of stamp art representing 200 artists from eighteen countries. The collection contains more than 500 full sheets of artistamps and several hundred single stamp designs
5) Specializing in artist-designed stamps

1) **Artpool**
2) Julia and György Galántai
Phone: + (361) 121.08.33
3) 1277 Budapest 23
Box/Pf. 52
Hungary
4) Documentation of progressive contemporary art events in Hungary and abroad. Artpool collects and exchanges artists' stamps, bookworks, post-cards, soundworks, posters, slides, magazines, and organizes exhibitions from the collection. Among the extensive collection are over 200 volumes of artists' books, including many rare editions from the early 1970s
5) Artpool specialized in collecting artists' stamps. In 1988 they were bequeathed an extensive artistamp collection belonging to the late Canadian artist and philatelist Michael Bidner. Presently, they hold the largest collection of artists' stamps in Eastern Europe
6) 1979

1) **Avenue B School of Art Archive**
2) John Evans

3) 199 E Street
New York City , NY 10009
USA
4) Archive includes mail art by Ray Johnson, May Wilson, A.M. Fine, plus many other members of the New York Correspondence Art School
5) Works on paper and correspondence art
6) 1965

1) **Banana Mail-Art Archive**
2) Anna Banana
Phone: +1 (604) 876.6764
3) 287 East 26th Avenue
Vancouver, BC
Canada V5V 2H2
4) Twelve boxes of mail art correspondence, collages, printed sheets; 4 boxes of unanswered, unfiled mail; 4 boxes of mail art show invitations and catalogues; 4 boxes of mail art publications; 1 box of postcards; 1 box of artistamps; 3 shelves of mail art books and publications
5) Current focus is artistamps
6) 1971

1) **Clemente Padin Archive**
2) Clemente Padin
Phone: +598 (2) 56.08.85
3) Casilla C. Central 1211
Montevideo, Uruguay
5) postcards and envelopes
6) Began collecting in 1967, but the Uruguayan military robbed his archive in 1977 and imprisoned him. Padin resumed his collection of mail art in 1983

1) **Creative Thing Collection**
2) Leslie Caldera
3) 12331 Muir Ct.
Whittier, CA 90601
USA
4) According to Caldera, the archive… "is a file cabinet and a few boxes in my garage. It is not available for public scrutiny at this time."
6) 1978

1) **DeSirey Dodge Archives**
2) Chris Dodge, Jan DeSirey
Phone: +1 (612) 823.1214
3) 4645 Columbus Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55407
USA
4) International mail art works, catalogues, posters, flyers, zines, audio cassettes, etc., and radical books, periodicals and ephemera (documents, pamphlets, manifestos). Size: 3–4 large boxes of mail art archives
5) Focus on political mail art, zines, anarchism

1) **DOC(K)S**
2) Julien Blaine
3) Le Moulin De Ventabren
13122 Ventabren
France
5) Work about Ludismail, 5,300 post cards, 6,000 artistamps, art, and artists' books
6) 1974

1) **Ecart Archive**
2) John Armleder
3) Ecart 6, rue Plantamour
P.O. Box 1438
CH–1211, Genève 1
Switzerland
4) Approximately 10,000 items from the 1950s to the 1990s
5) Avant-garde art including conceptual, Fluxus, and mail art
6) 1968

1) **Electric Bank**
2) Fred Truck
3) 4225 University
Des Moines, IA 50311
USA
5) Electric Bank is an electronic archive of performance art covering text, images, and animation of digital video. Among their extensive documentations of performance events is The Memory Bank devoted to publication of proposals for performance which have not been performed, as well as documentation of events done elsewhere by the originating artist
6) 1979

1) **Eternal Network Archive**
2) Chuck Welch, a.k.a. Crackerjack Kid
Phone: +1 (603) 448.4797
3) 108 Bluberry Hill Drive
Hanover, NH 03755
USA
4) A portion of Crackerjack Kid's Eternal Network Archive (Networker Databank) is located at the University of Iowa, School of Art and Art History, Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Collection, Iowa City, Iowa 52242. Over 2,000 documentary materials of the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992 are part of the Networker Databank. Bulk of archive in Hanover, NH where approximately 10,000 items include 400 mail artist files, 400 artists' books, 200 mail art fanzine titles, 200 mail art catalogues, numerous mail art essays and correspondences, 1,000 artistamp sheets, envelope covers, postcards, posters, audiocassettes, videos, and show invitations. Items are catalogued on Hypercard database

5) International Registry of Artistamps includes over 1,000 stampsheets by 150 artists from 40 nations
6) 1978

1) **Ethereal Open Network Archive (E.O.N.)**
2) Vittore Baroni
Phone: +39 (584) 96.39.18
3) 3rd floor
Via Battisti 339
Viareggio
Italy
4) Two small rooms and a large working space located in the artist's home. The audio section of the archive (cassettes, records, music magazine) is stored on the first floor of the artist's studio
5) "I have tried almost every facet of mail art, but do not have a precise area of specialization." (Vittore Baroni)
6) 1977

1) **Five/Cinq Archives**
2) James Warren Felter
Phone: +1 (604) 926.3917
3) 2707 Rosebery Avenue
West Vancouver, BC
Canada V7V 3A3
4) About fifteen cubic feet of mail art material. Archives currently being inventoried for a computer database
5) artistamps
6) 1960s

1) **Guillermo Deisler Collection**
2) Guillermo Deisler
3) Thälmannplatz 12, D–4020 halle/saale, Germany
5) Visual poetry, artists books
6) 1963

1) **HeMiSphere**
2) Angela and Henning Mittendorf
Phone: 069 529388
3) Allendorfer Strasse 20 B
6000 Frankfurt/Main 50
Germany.
4) Innumerable selected pieces from ten years of mail art communication
6) 1980

1) **H.R. Fricker Mail-Art-Networking and Tourism Archive**
2) Hans Ruedi Fricker
Phone: +41 (71) 94.22.49
3) Büro für künstlerische Umtriebe Hüttschwende
CH–9043 Trogen,
Switzerland
4) Personal correspondence, exchange, and collaboration; Networking material; over 200 mail art show documentations; Decentralized World Wide Mail Art Congress documents (1986); art stamp collection; copy-art; bookworks; mail art magazines; the tourism archive
6) 1981

1) **Knickerbocker Archive**
2) Joachim Frank
Phone: +1 (518) 474.7002
3) 278 South Manning
Albany, NY 12208
USA
4) Mail art postcards, correspondence, audio art, visual poetry. Archive includes Workspace Collection and Prop Collection
6) 1978

1) **Mahamat Hall**
2) Jo Klaffki
3) Kunst-Bahnhausen
PO Box 2631
D–495, Minden
Germany
5) Stamp art, artists' books, zines, audio art, etc.
6) 1979

1) **Mail Art Research Archive**
2) Klaus Groh
3) Heidedamm 6
D–2905 Edewecht/Klein Scharrel
Germany
4) Over 4,000 items; posters, artist books, artists' stamps, etc. East Europe, depressed countries; artists stamps, book works
6) 1970

1) **Marilyn R. Rosenberg Inter-Media Collection**
2) Marilyn R. Rosenberg
Phone: +1 (914) 737.2052
3) 67 Lakeview Avenue West
Peekskill, NY 10566
USA
4) Collection includes mail art, artists' books, visual poetry publications, mail art zines, small press publications, exhibition catalogues, correspondence, artistamps, and postcards
5) David Cole, Lord Byron, Kathy Ernst, Crackerjack Kid, Harley, and 50 other artists
6) 1977

1) **Mark Bloch Post Art Network Archive (The Pantheon)**
2) Mark Bloch (a.k.a. Panman)
Phone: +1 (212) 982.8454
3) PO Box 1500
New York City, NY 10009
USA
4) Archive consists of two sections, 1) The Pantheon, which

contains mail art catalogues, projects, artistamps, audio art, postcards, personal correspondence, and an extensive interview of mail artists from 1983 to present, 2) Pan Peace Archive, formed in 1988 and housed at the Special Collections Library of Kent State University. The collection includes show announcements, mail art objects, and mail artists whose work, according to Bloch, "demonstrates peaceful coexistence through teaching by example and do-it-yourself communications."

5) Experimental and non-traditional forms of long distance communication. Also numerous notes taken from telephone conversations with Ray Johnson. Books about Dada, Surrealism and Marcel Duchamp
6) 1977

1) **De Media Archive**
2) Jan De Boever
Phone: +32 (91) 77.93.94
3) Molenstraat 165
9900 Eeklo
Belgium
5) Mail art and small subcultural magazines
6) 1982

1) **Modern Realism Archive**
2) John Held Jr.
Phone: +1 (214) 553.1116
3) 1903 McMillan Avenue
Dallas TX 75206
USA
4) Fifteen years of correspondence with mail artists and participation in mail art projects and shows. Over 100 individual artist folders arranged by specialties. The archive includes a strong collection of primary and secondary source reference materials in addition to representative mail art of Japan, the Soviet Union, Eastern and Western Europe, South America, as well as all areas of the UnitedStates
5) Artists' books, Artistamps, mail art catalogs, mail art exhibitions, poster collection, historic reference library of mail art sourcebooks in book and magazine form, rubber stamps by artists, video collection, mail art magazines, photography collection
6) 1975

1) **Museo Internacionale de Neu Art**
2) Ed Varney
Phone +1 (604) 266.8289
3) 2268 West 45th Avenue
Vancouver, BC
Canada V6M 2J3
4) Over 15,000 pieces representing work by 1800 artists
5) Artistamps, postcards, mail art, prints, correspondence, poetry. Also catalogues and invitations pertinent to mail art and the eternal network
6) 1970

1) **Museum of Museums**
2) Johan van Geluwe
3) Jan Bouckaertstraat 8
B–8790 Waregem
Belgium
4) Meticulously collects everything that is related with the format idea of an art museum and in recycling findings in documents-and-archives-transformed-into-museumart.
6) Early 1970s

1) **Network Archive**
2) Géza Perneczky
3) Grosse Witschgasse 3–5
D 5000, Köln 1
Germany
4) Over 400 network catalogues, 500 volumes of artists books and other network publications, 460 titles and 1800 issues of network magazines; mail art, graphism, visual poetry. All magazines and publications are catalogued
5) Mail Art material, letters, graphics, etc.
6) 1970

1) **Networker Museum**
2) Angela and Peter Netmail (Peter Küstermann and Angela Pähler)
3) PO Box 2644
D–495, Minden
Germany
4) A one-room, smoke-free, hands-on working space, and networker museum/hotel for visiting mail artists
5) Archive centered on artistamps, catalogues and over 280 video features of networkers. We are also free-lance curators of networking activities at Minden, Germany's Civic Center in Old St. John's Church
6) 1982

1) **The Nomad Museum Mail Art Archives**
2) José Oliveira
3) Avenue Antonio Aug. Aguiar
27–5 esq., 1000 Lisbon
Portugal
4) approximately 2,000 works including stamp art, book art, zines, audio art, visual poetry, postcards, etc.
5) artists' books

1) **Open World Archive**
2) Dobrica Kamperelic´
Phone: +38 (11) 46.13.76
3) Ustanicka 152/VII–73
11000 Beograd (Sumice)
Yugoslavia
4) Mail art and Fluxus documentation; magazines, catalogues, artworks, objects, correspondence, sound poetry, audio and video cassettes

5) Focus is upon mail art magazines and fanzines, photo archive of mail art friends
6) 1980

1) **Other Books And So Archive**
2) Juan J. Agius
3) Case Postale 5243, CH–1211 Geneva 11, Switzerland; Phone: +41 (22) 781.14.05; Fax: +41 (22) 321.77.15

1) **Paumonock Traveller Archive**
2) David A. Cole
   Phone: +1 (612) 224.8932
3) 412 Laurel Avenue
   St. Paul, MN 55102
   USA
4) Archive includes visual poetry, artists' books, and collaborations
5) Major collection of works by Betty Danon and Marilyn R. Rosenberg
6) 1981

1) **R.A.T. Mail Art Archive**
2) Charles Francois
   Email Phone: +32 (41) 41.05.43
3) Quai Churchill, 35
   4020 Liege
   Belgium
4) Includes approximately 3,000 pieces of international mail art from the 1980s
5) No focus. Everything is kept with the envelope as received in the mail box, by chronological order. Each month all the pieces received are put in a cardboard box. A database allows immediate retrieval of any stored piece and can be used to produce statistics. The purpose of the collection is to provide some view of what is in the mail art stream. In 1991 a host computer called RATOS was created to collect and spread by phone electronic documents now produced by the mail art network. There are two clearance levels for access to RATOS that are available to mail artists and the public
6) Collection: 1982; Database: 1987; RATOS: 1989

1) **Robin Crozier Archive**
2) Robin Crozier
   Phone: +44 (91) 522.7294
3) 5B Tunstall Vale
   Sunderland
   SR2 7HP England
4) Mail art and associated materials are housed in a 8 ft. x 12 ft. room
5) Contains works by Robin Crozier and documentation of his activities that would not appear elsewhere. Also contains original works by other artists contributing to projects initiated by Robin Crozier. Items from the 1960s include surrealist reprints, Fluxus, Something Else Press, concrete poetry
6) 1972

1) **Ruch's Archive**
2) Günther Ruch
   +41 (22) 753.1221
3) 315 Route de Peney
   1242 Genève-Peney
   Switzerland
4) Ruch's Archive reflects mail art activities between 1970 and 1990 and includes over 7,000 letters, zines, stamp art, and 300 mail art books. 100 international stamp sheets representing fourteen countries were donated to the Swiss Postal Museum in Bern.
5) Focus is upon 400 artist made books, sixty international mail art show posters, 400 handmade postcards from forty countries, and 150 original stamp-sheets.
6) 1974–1988

1) **Spiegelman's Mailart Room**
2) Lon Spiegelman
3) 1556 Elevado St.
   Los Angeles, CA 90026
   USA
4) An extensive collection of mail art shows, projects and publications
6) 1978

1) **Subspace Archive**
2) Stephen Perkins
   Phone: +1 (319) 351.3035
3) 1816 E. College St.
   Iowa City, IA 52245
   USA
4) Approximately 500 files on mail art contacts/correspondents, 700 international publications. Archives of San Francisco Art Strike Action Committee, San Francisco Festival of Plagiarism photo-documentation
5) Primarily image/text based Xerox publications. Presently preparing a comprehensive hypercard database of publications in the archive

1) **TAM Archives**
2) Ruud Janssen
   +31 (13) 36.61.03
3) PO Box 10388
   5000 JJ Tilburg
   The Netherlands
4) Archive includes rubber stamps, chain letters, mail art letters, postcards, catalogues, buttons, artistamps and mail art books
6) 1980

1) **Umbrella Collection and Mail Art Archive**
2) Judith A. Hoffberg
3) PO Box 40100
Pasadena, CA 91114
USA
4) Umbrella Collection includes roughly 1,000 artifacts; 75 real umbrellas, 40 volumes of paper ephemera, mobiles, magnets, thermometers, dishes with umbrella motif. Mail art archive is organized alphabetically in envelopes by name of mail artist and includes stamp art, copy art, rubber stamp art, audio, records, and a reference collection of books about mail art
5) Both collections focus on anything having to do with umbrellas, mail art, stamp art, book art, audio art, etc.
6) 1978

1) **VEC (Visual Experimental Concrete)**
2) Rod Summers
3) Postbus 1051
NL–6201 BB Maastricht
The Netherlands
4) Audio art and poetry on cassette, tape and record. 735 entries. Cross-referenced cardex system of archive. Over 1,000 mail art and related publications
5) Focus is on personal contact between artists and poets through correspondence. Audio art and poetry publication
6) 1973

1) **Zaum Mail-Art Archive**
2) Rea Nikonova and Serge Segay
3) Sverdlova 175
Eysk 353660
Russia
4) Part of the mail art collection includes twenty-six visual poems from the First in Russia International Visual Poetry Exhibition—all donated to Eysk's Museum, Sverdlova 104, Eysk 353660, Russia
5) Manuscripts and drawings of Russian Futurist poet Vasilisk Gnedov (1890–1978), manuscripts of Russian Zaum poet Igor Bachterev, manuscripts of Russian Contemporary avant-garde poets such as Prigov, Monastyrsky, Laydermann, Sapgir and many others, mail art, visual poetry, etc.
6) 1979

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ETERNAL NETWORK

Appendix 5

MAIL ART MAGAZINES

Mail art magazines, often referred to by mail artists as "zines," are non-commercial, subculture publications. "Zine" is an abbreviation of fan magazine, or "fanzine," a term describing anything printed outside the usual mainstream publications that one can find on local newsstands. From a commercial viewpoint, zines are small-fry, no-slick, tawdry rags, lost in the underworld of leftist ideals and values. The zine scene proudly retorts they've "kept the faith," "haven't sold out," and are the last independent, democratic publishers to relate truth uncompromised by profit.

Artists who edit mail art zines escape commodification by using the international postal systems for the exchange or barter of their publications. Mail art zines may vary according to the political disposition or creative philosophy of individual artists. Generally, they are independent endeavors, but they also include international collaborative efforts of shared editorship (assembling magazines), under bannerheads like *Smile Magazine* or *Commonpress*.

Mail art zines are network galleries reflecting a wide range of intermedia art. Like mail art, there are no rules that dictate the subject or content of zines. Quality, quantity, method of production, subject matter, frequency of publication, page layout, selection of graphics, guidelines, selection of contributors, editing, distribution, and cost are all determined by the artist. Varieties of mail art zines range from single spreadsheets and broadsides to a complex, thematic edition of many pages. With the increasing affordability of computer software such as PageMaker and Illustrator, sophisticated typographic publications are now finding their way into the mail art network.

Among the first mail art fanzines to emerge in the early 1970s were dadazines published by such Bay Area Dadaists as Anna Banana, Bill Gaglioni, and Tim Mancusi. Ken Friedman's first twelve issues of *The New York Correspondence School Weekly Breeder* began in 1971, then was passed on to Stu Horn for a few months in 1972, and eventually was edited by Bay Area Dadaists Tim Mancusi and Bill Gaglione until 1974.

Over 300 mail art fanzines flourished in the 1970s, including Clemente Padin's *Ovum*, Don Milliken's *OR*, Opal L. Nation's *Strange Faeces*, Bill Gaglione and Anna Banana's *VILE Magazine*, Pawel Petasz' *Commonpress*, Chuck Stake's *Images and Information*, and Julien Blaine's *Doc(k)s*. As mail art evolved as an international phenomenon with thousands of participants, mail art zines mushroomed, too, with hundreds of publications: Japan: *AU Magazine,* ed. Artists Unidentified; Italy: *Arte Postale!* ed. Vittore Baroni; Switzerland: *Clinch Magazine*, ed. Günther Ruch; Canada: *Banana Rag*, ed. Anna Banana; Argentina: *Hoje-Hoja-Hoy*, ed. Graciela Marx; United States: *ND Magazine*, ed. Daniel Plunkett; Yugoslavia: *Open World*, ed. Dobrica Kamperelic, etc.

Mail art zines, artists' books, catalogue essays, and assorted articles appearing in mainstream newspapers and magazines are primary sources in which historians, archivists, curators, critics, and scholars can research the development of international mail art. Fortunately, librarian and mail artist John Held, Jr. has published *Mail Art: An Annotated Bibliography* (Scarecrow Press, 1991) wherein alternative magazines are listed. However, many of Held's bibliographic entries constitute rare editions primarily available by contacting private mail art archivists and a few museums or educational institutions.

Another authoritative text on mail art zines is *A Háló: The Magazine Network—The Trends of Alternative Art in the Light of Their Periodicals 1968–1988.* Edited by Géza Perneczky (Héttorony Edition, 1991), the 300-page illustrated survey contains an extensive bibliography of theoretical works, catalogues, references, conceptual art, visual poetry, rubber stamps, copyart, art reviews, situationism, and neoism. The first edition is in Hungarian, but an English edition was released in July 1993.

Reaching beyond the galaxy of mail art zines, readers can find a universe of networker magazines ranging from computer hackers to the international cassette culture (audio art and sounds) in Mike Gunderloy and Cari Goldberg Janice's illustrated *The World of Zines: A Guide to the Independent Magazine Revolution* (Penquin Books: New York, 1992, 158 pp). Boise State University English professor Tom Trusky is the first to introduce zines to academia with his show catalogue edition *Some Zines: American Alternative & Underground Magazines, Newsletters and APAs* . Trusky's catalogue accompanied the Fall 1992 zine exhibition at Student Union Art Gallery, Boise State University.

An interesting explorative study of the 1980s networker zine scene was published in 1992 by Steve Perkins; *Approaching the '80s Zine Scene: A Background Survey and Selected Annotated Bibliography*, (Plagiarist Press, Iowa City, IA). In defining alternative art publishing, Perkins digs into the underground of self-publishing activities by declaring what zines are and what they do:

> All zines are magazines, but not all magazines are zines. The dropping of the 'maga' to arrive at 'zine' denotes a particular set of attitudes, economics, and technological practices that are intertwined in this type of self-publishing. Non-commercial, self-published in small editions and very often photocopied, zines arise out of particular subcultural milieus united by their common needs and interests. Their circulation, predominantly within these particular environments, places them deep under the web of cultural activity. (p. 1)

This "Mail Art Magazines" appendix is compiled from the collections of Marilyn R. Rosenberg, Crackerjack Kid, James Lewes, Vittore Baroni, Guy Bleus, Ed Varney, Géza Perneczky, The University of Iowa's Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Archive (designated ATCA in listings), The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities (designated Jean Brown Collection in listings), and the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry.

The sequence of data in this appendix is as follows: 1) Title. 2) Name of editor (publisher), artistic organization. 3) Place of publication: Country. 4) Date of publication (first issue). 5) Archive/Collection in brackets. 6) Issue Vol. s and numbers. The editor acknowledges that some valuable information has been excluded from this appendix, such as the size format for each zine and printing techniques employed by artist/editors. Few mail art zines accommodate such neat categories, and more often forms and techniques in each mail art zine vary from issue to issue. Efforts are equally elusive in determining whether mail art zines in this appendix are still in print. The problem exists, in part, because the appendix covers thirty years of mail art zines. Obviously, many of the artist/publishers are difficult to locate. For these reasons it is sensible to help readers locate archives and collections where examples exist, a research tool which at the time of this writing has not been indicated in previous publications about mail art zines.

Archives and collections that appear in brackets are: (ATCA), Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Archive; (Sackner Archive) Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry; (Jean Brown Collection) The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; (Lewes Collection) James Lewes; (Perneczky Collection) Géza Perneczky; (Baroni Collection) Vittore Baroni, Ethereal Open Network Archive; (Bleus Collection) Guy Bleus, The Administration Centre; (Varney Collection) Ed Varney, Museo Internacionale de Neu Art; (Rosenberg Collection) Marilyn R. Rosenberg Inter-media Collection; (Crackerjack Collection), Chuck Welch, Crackerjack Kid Eternal Network Archive. Readers may acquire mailing addresses and additional information about these archives in Appendix 4.

* * * * * *

A

Abraxus. Naoko Masuda and J. Akoitashi Akitaken. Japan. 1970. (Sackner Archive) Nos. 4–13, 14–20, 23–30

Ace Comix. Tim Robertson, Joe Acme. Canada. 1979 (Perneczky Collection) Vol. 1, No. 1

The Acts the Shelflife. Miekal And, Liz Was. U.S. 1986. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 2

Adenoidi. G. Romizi. Italy. 198(?) (Baroni Collection) Nos. 4, 6, 7

Aerosol. Metallic Avau. Belgium. 1978. (Sackner Archive) 1981 Nos. 15–17; 1982 Nos. 18–20; 1983 No. 22; 1984 No. 23

Afzet (Art Zendings). Sonja van der Burg, A. Margot van Oosten. The Netherlands. 1980. (Jean Brown Collection) 1982 No. 3; 1985 3-dimensional issue

The Agent. Geezette Munday produced by Jim Holt. England. 1979. (ATCA) Nos. 1, 2

Algo Pasa. Manuel Marin. Mexico. 1981. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 9, 12

Alto. Jean Paul Morelle. Italy. 1986. (Baroni Collection) Nos. 0–5

A Margem. Falves Silva, Franklin Capistrano. Brazil. 1987. (Perneczky Collection) Vol. 2 No. 12

Anatole au Cafe de l'Aube. Thierry Tillier. Belgium. 1976. (Perneczky Collection) No. 9

Anthropology/Anthro Art. Volker Hamann. Germany. 1981. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 2

Anti Isolation. Miekel And & Liz Was. U.S. 1985. (Baroni Collection) 3/4; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 2, 3/4

Antivalues. Leszek Przyjemski and Pawel Petasz. Poland. 1977. (ATCA) Nos. 1, 2; 1977 No. 2

Apocrypha. Sybil Coffey. U.S. 1992. (Crackerjack Collection) No. 5

Art Communication Edition. Super Vision Publication. Canada. 1977. (ATCA) Vol. 1, Nos. 5–7, 9; Vol. 2, No. 1

Artcomnet. Larry Smith. U.S. 1982. (Crackerjack Collection) 1988 February issue

Art Contemporary. Carl E. Loeffler and Mary Stofflet. U.S. 1976. (ATCA) Retrospective Issue; Modern European Art Issue; Catalog Issue; Vol. 2, No. 2; Vol. 3, No. 2

Arte(f)actos. Damaso Ogaz. Venezuela. 1980. (Baroni Collection) No. 1

Arte Postale! Vittore Baroni. Italy. 1979. (ATCA) Nos. 3, 5, 6, 13, 17, 20; (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–10, 15, 18, 29, 30, 32–35, 37, 38, 40, 43, 44, 48, 54–66; (Sackner Archive) Nos. 1–49; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–56

Art Extreme. Waisnis. U.S. 1981. (Rosenberg Collection) Fall–Winter 1981–1982

Art Ink. Terri Humphrey. U.S. 1978. (ATCA) spring/summer 1980; fall 1980; winter 1981; summer 1981; fall 1981; winter 1982

Art In Opposition. Gianni Becciani. Italy. 1979. (Baroni Collection) Nos. 1, 5

Art Life. Joe Cardella. U.S. 1981. (Sackner Archive) Vol. 1, Nos. 8, 11; Vol. 2, Nos. 5, 8–10; Vol. 3, Nos. 1–11; Vol. 4, Nos. 1–11; (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. 4, Nos. 2, 5, 9

Art Rite. E. Deak, W. Robinson, and A. Canepa. U.S. 1973. (ATCA) Nos. 7, 10; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 7, 8, 12–15, 17–19

Artist (Formerly Punk Artist)**.** Marco Cy. Italy. 1979. (ATCA) Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 13, 17

Artistamp News. Anna Banana. Canada. 1991. (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. 1, Nos. 1, 2; Vol. 2, No. 1; Vol. 3, Nos. 1, 2

Artistamp Supplement. Michael Bidner. Canada. 1983. (Crackerjack Collection) 1983 Nos. 1–4

Artists' International Newspaper. Ruth Howard. U.S. 1983. (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. 1, No. 1; (ATCA) Vol. 1, No. 1

Artpolice. Frank Gaard. U.S. 1974. (Jean Brown Collection) unidentified issues; (Perneczky Collection) 30 issues

Art Zone. Vincent Rossi. U.S. 1979. (ATCA) Vol. 2 No. 1

Assembling. Richard Kostelanetz. U.S. 1970. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 10–12

AU Magazine. Artists Union: Shozo Shimamoto. Japan. 1976. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 63, 68, 70–72, 74–78, 81, 83, 96, 101, 102, 104, 105, 110–119; (Jean Brown Collection) Nos. 62, 65

B

Bambu. Ubaldo Giacomucci. Italy. 1981. (Crackerjack Collection) 1993 No. 13; (Perneczky Collection) No. 2

Banana Rag. Anna Banana. Canada. 1981 (ATCA) Nos. 9, 10, 12, 14; (Jean Brown Collection) one issue from 1980—issue number not identified; (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 19, 21–26, 28; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–27

Bandes. Atelier du 3x3:33. French. 1986. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 3, 5

The B.A.T. Vittore Baroni. Italy. 1987. (Crackerjack Collection) 1987 No. 1

Beef. Pakka K. Kavan, Marina Racine. U.S. 1981. (ATCA) Nos. 4–6

Bela Lugosi's Magazine. Lambi Caravita. Italy. 1986. (Bleus Collection) 1986 Nos. 2, 3

Benzine. Allan Bealy. U.S. 1980. (Sackner Archive) Vol. 1, Nos. 1–8

Bibliozine. John Held, Jr. U.S. 1992 (Crackerjack Archive) Nos. 1–10, 12–15, 19, 20, 23–25

Bikini Girl. Lisa Baumgardner. U.S. 1979. (ATCA) Nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 8

Bile. Bradley Lastname. U.S. 1978. (ATCA) Homage to Mal D' Oror Issue; Aunt Fitz Issue; Insect & Safety Pin Issue; Tracing Paper Issue; Rose Selavy Issue; 3D Molecule Issue; Organ in Sand Issue; UBU Issue; Tony the Tiger Issue; Skulls as Dada Issue; Glue Issue; Official Target Issue; Pyramid Eye Issue; Red/Black Cover Issue; (Sackner Archive) May 1980; Memo from DADA long legs; Overnight they lost that dizzy and billious feeling; Have image bank will travel; Untitled (1982); Floridade (1982); Thus Spake Dadathrustra (1982)

Biulletin Maximal Art. Grzegorz Dziamski. Poland. 1978. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 2

Black Boat. Tony Breadley, Ron Crowcroft. England. 1979. (Perneczky Collection) No. 3

Blood & Gold. Ines Ruf, Graf Haufen. Germany. 1987. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–8

Box of Water. Stephen Perkins. U.S. 1985. (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. Nos. 1–4

Brain Cell. Ryosuke Cohen. Japan. 1985. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 5, 13, 17, 20–40, 49, 61, 81–100, 118, 126, 128, 130–133, 136, 162,

182, 185, 190, 199–201, 207, 211, 214, 219, 221–260, 263, 266, 270, 272–274, 276, 283, 287, 290

The Bridge. Howard Munson. U.S. 1982. (Bleus Collection) 1982 Vol. 1, Nos. 1–3

B.T. G. Celant, M. Diacono, D. Palazzoli, T. Trini. Italy. 1967. (ATCA) Nos. 1, 2, 5

C

Cabaret Voltaire. Steve Hitchcock. U.S. 1977. (ATCA) Nos. 1–5

Cage: Anti Embargo Magazine. Jovanovic Alexandar. Serbia. 1992. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–4

Camberra Telegraph. Bob Kerr, Terry Reid. Australia. 1975. (Perneczky Collection) No. 1

Camera Obscura. Stephan Barbery. Belgium. 1982. (Bleus Collection) 1983 Nos. 1–3, 5–8; 1984 Nos. 10, 11

Camolawa–Pish. Carlos Montes De Oca. Chile. 1991. (Crackerjack Collection) No. 1

Capsa. J.M. Calleja. Spain. 1983. (Bleus Collection) 1983 No. 4

Care. Bart Boumans. The Netherlands. 1982. (Jean Brown Collection) issues not identified; (Sackner Archive) 1982 Nos. 1–3; 1983 No. 4

Cart. Stampa Alternativa. Italy. 1987. (Baroni Collection) Nos. 1–3

C(art)a. Damaso Orgaz. Venezuela. 1978. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 3–10, 13, 15, 18, 19, 26–36, 38

Cavellini. Giovanni Achille Cavellini. Italy. 1975. (ATCA) The Diaries of G.A. Cavellini 1975; Nemo Propheta in Patria; Cavellini in California & Budapest; In the Jungle of Art; Cimeli; Continuo La Serie Delle; 25 Quari Della Colexione Cavellini; (Crackerjack Collection) The Diaries of G.A. Cavellini 1975; Nemo Propheta in Patria; Cavellini in California & Budapest; In the Jungle of Art; Autoritratti, Self-Portraits, Autoportraits, Selbstporträts

Certain Gestures. David Tiffen. England. 1982. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 5, 6, 7

Chimera. Chimera. U.S. 1982. (Sackner Archive) 1983 Nos. 5–8; 1984 Nos. 9–13; 1985 Nos. 14–16; 1986 17–19, 1987 No. 20

Cirque Divers. Antalei C.D. Belgium. 1980 (Bleus Collection) Nos. 100–139

Cisoria Arte. Damaso Ogaz. Venezuela. 1975. (ATCA) Nos. 1–4; (Sackner Archive) Nos. 1–3

Classified Magazine. Paulo Bruscky. Brazil. 1978. (Crackerjack Collection) No. 1

Clinch Magazine. Günther Ruch. Switzerland. 1983. (Crackerjack Collection) 1983 No. 1, Mail-Performances; 1983 No. 2, Mail-Music; 1983 No. 3, Visual Poetry; 1984 No. 4, Earcut and Social Engagement; 1984 No. 5 Mail Art History; 1985 No. 6, Endless; 1987 No. 7, International Mail Art Congress; 1988 No. 8, Sight-seeing; 1988 No. 10, The Last Exchange; (Sackner Archive) Nos. 1–5; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–10

Colectivo-3. Cesar Espinoza. Mexico 1982. (Crackerjack Collection) 1982 Nos. 5, 6; 1983 Nos. 8–11; 1984 No. 13; 1985 Nos. 9, 10; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–A, 2–B, 6, 13

Collective Farm. Rimma Gerlovina and Valeriy Gerlovin. U.S. 1986. (Sackner Archive) Nos. 1–4

Commonpress. Pawel Petasz. Poland. 1977. (ATCA) Nos. 1–3, 6, 11–13, 18, 22, 23, 33; (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1, 2, 4–6, 8, 10–19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 32–34, 36, 37, 39, 42a, 46–49, 51, 53, 55–57, 60, 64, 77, 100; (Sackner Archive) Nos. 2, 3, 8, 9, 11–13, 17, 19, 23, 25, 26, 33, 37, 39, 47; (Bleus Collection) Nos. 1–6, 8–20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 31–34, 36–39, 41, 42a, 44, 46–51, 53–57, 59, 60, 64, 77, 100

Con-Fusion. Graciela Gutierrez Marx. Argentina. 1982. (Bleus Collection) 1982 Vol. 1, No. 1

Constrictor Magazine. Alessandro Aiello, Enrico Aresu. Italy. 1984. (Bleus Collection)1984 Nos. 1–3

Convolusions. Cerebral Shorts. Australia. 1989. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–5

Copy Left. Manfred Vanci Stirnemann. Switzerland. 1984. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 2, 4, 5, 9, 10

Correspondence Life. Ruth Howard. U.S. 1983. (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. 1, No. 1

Correspondence Novels. David Zack. Mexico. 1983. (Crackerjack Collection) March 1983 "What's A Formular?" pp 57–60; "Petasz's Commonpress," pp.73–80; "The Cracker Jack Kid's Peach Folio," pp. 81–88; "Sr. Zabala, From Argentina," pp. 97–104; "Carrion's Slow P.O.," pp. 105–112; "Spiegelman's Dilemna," pp. 129–136; 1985 Chapter Outline of *Modern Mail Art :* (Collection of Correspondence Novels in 25 Chapters); "Correspondense Novel (short story)" pp 1–19

Couch Potato Magazine. Monica Dunlap. U.S. 1986. (Crackerjack Collection) April 1986 issue

Crash. Franco Piri–Focardi. Italy. 198(?). (Baroni Collection) No. 15

Crazy, Old Poets' Magazine. David Zack. Mexico. 1984. (Crackerjack Collection) January 1984 issue

Creative Art Revue. Guy Stückens. Belgium. 1983. (Bleus Collection) 1983 No. 3; 1984 Nos. 5, 7, 9; 1985 No. 10

D

Dada Daily. Madeline Behrens–Brigham U.S. 1980. (ATCA) 1980 August, September, October, November, December; 1981 January, June, July, August

Dadazine. Bill Gaglione. U.S. 1975. (ATCA) Fall 1975 issue; Rubber stamp issue

Data File. Richard Meade. U.S. 1983. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–26

Delfin. Rheda—Wiedenbruck. Germany. 1983. (Sackner Archive) No. 1

Doc(k)s. Julien Blaine. France. 1976. (Sackner Archive) 1976 Nos. 1–6; 1977 Nos. 7–11; 1978 Nos. 12–14 Special Postcards; 1979 Nos. 15–22; 1980 Nos. 23–34 Special Postcards Destination Paris; 1981 Nos. 35–40; 1981–82 Nos. 41–45; 1982 Nos. 46–53; 1983 Nos. 54–59; Mail Artists of the World 1979; International Mail Art Fair 1979

Doewa Mail Art. Filip Goubert. Belgium. 1991. (Bleus Collection) 1991 No. 1

Double. Rea Nikonova. Russian. 1991. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–5

Dragon Rouge. Llys Dana/Horus. France. 1975. (Bleus Collection) 1976 No. 5; 1977 No. 7

Dreamtime Talking Mail. Miekal And & Elizabeth Was. U.S. 1991. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–4

Dumb Ox. James Hugunin. U.S. 1976. (ATCA) Nos. 1–4, 8, 9

Duplex Planet. David Greenberger. U.S. 1979. (ATCA) Nos. 4–34

E

Eat It Up. Tom Patrick. U.S. 1981. (ATCA) No. 20; (Jean Brown Collection) Nos. 1–15; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–46

Edition. Rick Hambleton/Intermedia Press. Canada. 1978. (ATCA) No. 1

Egozine. Robert J. Lambert. U.S. 1975. (ATCA) No. 4

Ekstraktion. Piotr Aakoun. Belgium. 1984. (Bleus Collection) 1984 No. 2; 1985 Nos. 3–5; 1986 No. 6; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 3

El Djarida. Idiot Press. Norway. 1985. (Baroni Collection) Nos. 3–7; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–8

Ephemera. Ulises Carrion. The Netherlands. 1977. (ATCA) Nos. 1, 2, 4–7; (Sackner Archive) Nos. 2–6, 9, 10; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–12; (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–3, 7; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–12

Ephemeral Art. Pawel Petasz. Poland. 1980. (Crackerjack Collection) 1980 No. 2; 1981 No. 1

Epod. Kirby Malone, Marshall Reese. U.S. 1978. (ATCA) No. 1

Eraser Carvers Quarterly. Mick Mather. U.S. 1990. (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. 1, No. 3

Estra. E.G. Scalini. Italy. 1980 (Sackner Archive). Nos. 1–9

Estudio. Shiela Holz. U.S. 1988. (Lewes Collection) Nos. 10–14

Everybody's Creativity. Albrecht D. Germany. 1971. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 2

F

4-U-2 Post Magazine. Mick Mather. U.S. 1983. (Crackerjack Collection) 1985 September issue

Face of the Congress. Mark Corotto. U.S. 1991. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–4, 6, 7

Factsheet Five. founding editor, Mike Gunderloy; present editor, R. Seth Friedman. U.S. 1982. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 35, 36, 38, 42, 44, 47–52; (Lewes Collection) Nos. 32–42

Fall Out. Winston Smith et al. U.S. 1981. (ATCA) Nos. 3, 4; (Lewes Collection) Nos. 3–5

Faltblatten. Klaus Peter-Fürstenau. Germany. 1983. (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. 2, Nos. 8, 9

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P

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T

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Temple Post. José VdBroucke. Belgium. 1990? (Crackerjack Collection) June 1991, October 1991, January 1992
Tensetendoned. M.B. Corbett. U.S. 1992. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–16
Texto Poetico. Bartolome Fernando. Spain. 1977. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 6–9
Theatre Du Silence. Giampaolo Guerini. Italy. 1977(?). (Bleus Collection) 1981 No. 9
Le Timbre. Daniel Daligand. France. 1983. (Crackerjack Collection) 1985, last issue; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 3–5, not signed issue, Rimbaud issue
Tongue. Richard Olson. U.S. 1980. (Crackerjack Collection) 1980, Nos. 14, 21–23, 25, 26; 1981 April 4 issue; 1981, Vol. 2, No. 1; 1982 Vol. 2, Nos. 2, 3, 5, 6; 1983 Vol. 3, No. 1
Total. Nenad Bogdanovic. Yugoslavia. 1984. (Baroni Collection) Nos. 1–15; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 5, 12, 13, 15–17
Totem. Joaquim Branco. Brazil. 1979. (Baroni Collection) No. 11

Tracce. U. Giacomucci. Italy. 1982. (ATCA) Vol. 1, Nos. 6–8; Vol. 2, No. 31; (Sackner Archive) Vol. 1, Nos. 1, 2; Vol. 2, Nos. 2, 3; Vol. 3, Nos. 7–9

Transmog. Ficus Strangulensis. U.S. 1991. (Crackerjack Collection) No. 13

TRAX. Piermario Ciani, Vittore Baroni, Massimo Giacon. Italy. 1981. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 0185, 0785, 1285, 0286, 0386, 0586, 0686, 0786, 0886, 0986, 1186, Last TRAX

Tuyau (Quotidien). (Mail Art Daily) Didier Moulinier. French. 1987. (Perneczky Collection) No. 137

U

Umbrella. Judith Hoffberg. U.S. 1978. (ATCA) Vol. 1, Nos. 1, 6; Vol. 2, Nos. 1, 3, 4–6; Vol. 3, Nos. 1–3, 6; Vol. 4, Nos. 2, 4; Vol. 5, Nos. 1–5; Vol. 6, No. 2; (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. 4, Nos. 1–5; Vol. 5, Nos. 1–5; Vol. 6, Nos. 1–5, Vol. 7, Nos. 1, 2; Vol. 9, No. 2; Vol. 16, No. 1

UNI vers. Guillermo Deisler. Germany. 1988. (Crackerjack Collection) No. 21; (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1–6, 8, 9

V

Velocity. E. Hawkins. U.S. 1984. (Rosenberg Collection)

Verticalismo. Salvatore Commercio. Italy. 1975. (Bleus Collection) 1982 Vol. 8, Nos. 21, 22

Views. Robin Crozier. England. 1977. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 83, 84

Vile. Anna Banana, Bill Gaglione. U.S. 1974. (University of Iowa Art Library) Nos. 1–6; (Sackner Archive) Nos. 1–8; (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 8

Void. Bernard Banville (Zona). U.S. 1983. (Bleus Collection) 1984 Vol. 1, No. 2

Vomit. Neo Screw. U.S. 1987. (Lewes Collection) Nos. 1–8

W

Wall. Kristof D'Haeseleer. Belgium. 1989. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 4, 7–9

Wellcomet Bulletin. Gilberto Prodo and Lucia Fonseca. Brazil. 1985. (Baroni Collection) Nos. 3, 5, 6, 9, 10; (Perneczky Collection) 2–6, 7/8

West Bay Dadaist. Arthur Craven, Charles Chickadel, Bill Gaglione/Trinity Press. U.S. 1973. (ATCA) Vol. 1, No. 4; Vol. 2, Nos. 5, 6

Wow. Slavo Matkovic, Bálint Szombathy. Yugoslavia. 1974. (Perneczky Collection) Nos. 1, 3, 4–6

X

Xero Post. Sheldon Polsky. U.S. 1981. (ATCA) Nos. 5, 6; (Crackerjack Collection) Vol. 1, No. 1

Y

Yawn. Lloyd Dunn. U.S. 1989. (Crackerjack Collection) Nos. 1–38; Issue No. 38 includes Stewart Home's "Assessing the Art Strike 1990—1993"

Z

Zerosscopic 845. Julien Blaine (Ed. Nepe). France. 1980. (Bleus Collection) 1981 No. 5

Zig-Zag-Post (ZZ Post). Lucio Kume. Brazil. 1986. (Perneczky Collection) No. 2

Zippily. Kristof D'Haeseleer. Belgium. 1991. (Crackerjack Collection) No. 1

ETERNAL NETWORK

Appendix 6

THE NETWORKER DATABANK

The Networker Databank conveys the role of the artist/ networker in over 500 entries documenting 2,000 artifacts including correspondence, rubber stamps, artists' stamps, stickers, networker statements, computer disks, audio and video cassettes, photographs, drawings, magazines, artists' books, T-shirts, and 3-D objects. Most of the materials were mailed by marginal network artists between August 1, 1991 and March 15, 1993, but the Networker Databank continues to serve as an essential telenetlink between mail art networkers and the global telematic community. Crackerjack Kid (Chuck Welch) organized the databank with a two-fold purpose; 1) as an on-going project for the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992, and 2) as mail art's first on-line database connection to Internet, a worldwide web of interconnected, decentralized telecommunication networks.

The Networker Congress was first proposed by Swiss conceptual artist H.R. Fricker in "Mail Art: A Process of Detachment, a text presented in March 1990 for the *Eternal Network* anthology. In early 1991 Fricker met with fellow Swiss artist Peter W. Kaufmann and together they drafted an invitational flyer entitled, *Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992*, "Where two or more artists/networkers meet in the course of 1992, there a congress will take place." The Networker Congresses grew into a huge forum of over 250 congresses in approximately twenty-five countries, far exceeding the Mail Art Congresses of 1986.

Fricker and Kaufmann sought active, creative input from networker artists on six continents. American artists Lloyd Dunn, Steve Perkins, John Held, Jr., Crackerjack Kid, and Mark Corroto joined Fricker and Kaufmann early (summer 1991) in the development of the NC92 concept and served as active "netlink facilitators." final drafts of the Networker Congress invitations (Fig. No. 87, p. 144) included netlink contacts from Africa, South America, North America, Asia, Europe and Australia. The year-long collective work by networkers of NC92 represented a first major effort among artists to cross-over and introduce other underground networks to each other. Until this moment countless marginal network cultures, often operating in parallel directions, were unaware of one another.

The Networker Congresses were based on the acknowledgment that a new form of artist, the networker, was emerging from international network cultures of the alternative press, mail artists, telematic artists, flyposter artists, cyberpunks, cassette bands, rubber stampers, and stamp artists. Most networkers use technology to detourn or jam dominant culture, to serve political and social interests, to collaborate, disseminate or distort information, to play, exchange art, and to diminish competition through the spirit of giving art rather than selling out. Networkers don't make a living out of art, they make an art out of living.

Among the scores of networker congress themes were John Held, Jr.'s *Fax Congress*, Jennifer Hubert's *Woman's Congress*, Miekal And & Liz Was' *Dreamtime Village Corroboree*, Crackerjack Kid's *Netshaker Harmonic Divergence (Metanet),* and Telenetlink Project, Rea Nikonova and Serge Segay's *Vacuum Congress*, Bill Gaglione's *Rubberstamp Congress*, Mike Dyar's *Joseph Beuys Seance*, Guy Bleus' *Antwerp Zoo Congress*, and O.Jason and Calum Selkirk's *Seizing the Media Congress*.

Numerous, on-going networker projects included Peter Küstermann and Angela Pähler's global tour as "Netmail carriers," a creative, extravagant version of congressional tourism as popularized by H.R. Fricker during the 1986 mail art congresses. Throughout 1992 Küstermann and Pähler travelled over 100,000 miles through fifty national borders while carrying 200 lbs. of mail art to 300 networkers. Their global performance combined congressing, lecturing, and hand-delivering mail person-to-person. Italian mail artist Vittore Baroni helped create and record a networker congress anthem, *Let's Network Together*, and American mail artist Mark Corroto produced *Face of the Congress* networker congress zine.

Most of the organizers of NC92 congresses have been active international mail artists. They emerged from the year of activities with a deeper awareness of intermedia involvement in global network communities, and a realization that "I am a mail

artist, sometimes." While many mail artists visited friends in the flesh, others, unable to travel, "meta-networker spirit to spirit" in Crackerjack Kid's *NC92 Telenetlink Congress*, a homebased telecommunication project conducted with networkers using personal computers and modems connected to the Internet. Serbian and Croat mail artists established networker peace congresses, one such congress taking place in a village where a battle raged around them.

The Networker Databank functions as an open repository. Among the Networker Databank appendix listings are varied networker definitions which complement essays the editor of *Eternal Network* collected between 1988 and 1991. Indeed, over half of the essayists appearing in the *Eternal Network* anthology eventually participated in the 1992 networker congresses.

Within the swirling vortex of NC92 activities, Peter W. Kaufmann (Switzerland), John Held, Jr. (U.S.A.), Mark Corroto (U.S.A.), Peter Küstermann (Germany), Angela Pähler (Germany), and Crackerjack Kid (U.S.A.) all worked to collect materials with the purpose of making them accessible to NC92 participants and to a larger audience. Mark Corroto's objective was to form a pictorial collage of NC92, John Held, Jr. established a 324-page annotated bibliography, Peter Kaufmann wrote *Congress Chronology DNC '92*—an elaborate accounting of all the networker mail he received in 1992, Peter Küstermann and Angela Pähler kept a 500 page travelogue as they visited scores of congresses around the world, and Crackerjack Kid created the NC92 Telenetlink Project and Networker Databank, both made available, in part, through Dartmouth College's computer mainframe to the international telecommunication networks—Internet.

All five NC92 documentary projects intersect each other in various documentary objectives, and so there is some duplication of printed matter, photographs, catalogues, audio cassettes, videos, computer disks, and other NC92 items. But none of the five major NC92 documents correspond exactly because the wealth of information generated by 251 congresses made a single authoritative text impractical.

While the Networker Databank project invitations were widely disseminated through the Internet and by mail to congress participants, some congresses didn't create documentation for lack of time, money, or interest. Furthermore, some congress participants who did create congress documents failed to mail them to the Networker Databank. Still, networker congress materials arrived in large numbers and numerous entries require acknowledgment, though space in this appendix is limited.

Readers wishing to acquire research information and access to the Networker Databank materials can write to Estera Milman, Director of "Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts Archive" School of Art and Art History, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242, or contact the Library, Museum of Modern Art, New York City. The entire databank is also available in hard copy or on computer disk by writing to Networker Databank, 108 Blueberry Hill Dr., Hanover, NH 03755. Electronic mail access via Internet can be made through connection with Canadian Jeff Mann's Artcast Project: send the message "Netlink files" to: <listserv@intacc.uucp>.

Artists who are active in the international networker culture are welcome to send (duplicate copies welcome when possible) mail art/alternative culture zines, artistamps, audio art, video documentaries/projects, rubber stamp art, correspondence, copy art, artists' books, articles, research, personal archives, or any materials exploring the role of the artist as global networker. Mail all materials (no returns) to the Networker Databank, 108 Blueberry Hill Dr., Hanover, NH 03755. Artifacts are assigned a catalogue number, recorded in the Networker Databank, placed on-line through the Internet, and placed in Chuck Welch's Networker Databank at University of Iowa's Alternative Traditions In the Contemporary Arts Archive.

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Audio and Video Cassette Recordings

Baroni, Vittore, Enrico Marani and Manitu Rossi. *Let's Network Together*, Viareggio, Italy: Le Forbici Di Manitu, 1992. 45 RPM vinyl single. Netbank No. 234: The unofficial spiritual hymn of the NC92. Recording accompanies Issue No. 63 of Baroni's *Arte Postale!* (Netbank No. 504)

Del Prete, Raimondo and Franco Santini. *I Santini Del Prete*. Vada, Italy, 1992. C-60 audio cassette. Netbank No. 494. Networker songs and performances including *Networker Blues*, written by Vittore Baroni, *Chanson Performing Martello*, written by Joki and Del Prete, and *Long Live Mail Art* by Raimondo Del Prete.

Del Prete, Raimondo and Franco Santini. *Networker Congress Vada, Italy*. Vada, Italy, May 22, 1992. One hour, 21 minute video. Netbank No. 494.

Kid, Crackerjack. *Netshaker Harmonic Divergence Video Tape*, Hanover, NH: Eternal Network Archive, 1992. Two-hour video cassette. Netbank No. 354. Documentation of Crackerjack Kid's March 19–22, 1992 metanet gathering featuring Spirit Netlink Performance, Telenetlink Congress, Timeless Capsule Burial, and congress artist book documentation entitled *Spring Garden, Vol. 1.*

Moad, Mallory and E.Z. Smith. 1992 *Desensitized World-Wide Nutcracker Congress*. Fresno, CA, 1992. Thirty-minute video cassette recording. Netbank No. 373. Netrocker seance, mail art exhibition at Gallery 25, and *Three Minute Networker Cassette Performance*.

Nikonova, Rea and Serge Segay. *Metanet Congress in the Eysk Museum*. Eysk, Russia, March 22, 1992. Sixty-minute audio cassette. Netbank No. 492. Contents include a poetry reading by Russian poets living in America, concert music by American composer Janecek, and a *Spirit Netlink Performance* as proposed by Crackerjack Kid.

Shimamoto, Shozo. *Head Networking*. Nishinomiya, Japan: Shozo Shimamoto, 1992. One-hour video cassette recording. Netbank No. 354. Networking projects initiated by Shozo Shimamoto including performances, installations, exhibitions, and mail art works. In autobiographical accounts Shimamoto relates his participation in the Japanese avant-garde group Gutai, as well as his personal philosophy of networking.

Alternative and Mainstream Magazines

Baroni, Vittore, ed. *Real Correspondence*. Viareggio, Italy: Near the Edge Editions 4 (February 1992): 1–4. Netbank No. 290: Contains essay by Baroni and description of the March 22, 1992 *Meta-Concert (In Spirit)*.

Daligand, Daniel, ed. *Le Timbré*. Levallois, France: Daniel Daligand (August 1992): 1–10. Netbank No. 372: Special issue of *Le Timbré* devoted to the *Liege-Maastricht Networker Congress* session, August 7–9, 1992.

Dunn, Lloyd, ed. *Retrofuturism*. Iowa City, Iowa: The Drawing Legion 15 (August 1991): 1688–1741. Netbank No. 371: This quarterly zine includes letters among networkers involved in the formulative stages of NC92.

FaGaGaGa. *The Face of the Congress*. Youngstown, Ohio: Mark Corroto, Issues Nos.1–4, 1992. Netbank No. 316: A portrait zine of the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992.

Joki. *Open Netmag*. Minden, Germany: Kunst-Bahnhausen-Academy, Nos.1, 3, 1992. Netbank No. 343: Thematic issues with artistamps, projects, and articles relating to networking and NC92.

Kaufmann, Peter W. *Chronology of the World-Wide Networker Congress 1992*. Ebmatingen, Switzerland: Peter W. Kaufmann, 1992. Netbank No. 370: A diary of the NC92 by major congress coordinator Peter W. Kaufmann.

Kid, Crackerjack. *Netshaker*. Hanover, NH: Crackerjack Kid, Issues Nos. 1, 2, 1992; No. 1, 1993 Netbank No. 371: First issue lists 250 entries of the NC92 Networker Databank. Issue 2 includes "NC92 Contact List" and "Netshaker Seance with Joseph Beuys." Issue 1, Vol. 2 contains "Introducing Mail Art: Karen Eliot Interviews Crackerjack Kid and Honoria," and the essay "Networker Databank."

Marx, Graciela G. *Hoje Hoja Hoy*. La Plata, Argentina: Association of Latin American and Caribbean Artists, March 1992. Netbank No. 288: Issue devoted to the NC92 *Spirit Netlink Performance* and Metanet 1992 proposals.

Perkins, Stephen and Lloyd Dunn. *Networker Congress Statements*. Iowa City, Iowa: The Drawing Legion, September 1991. Netbank No. 164: Booklet contains numerous networker statements intended to open up debate and provide a vehicle for Congress discussions.

Ruggiero, Greg. Noospapers. Westfield, NJ: *The Immediast Underground*, Issues Nos. 8, 9, 1991. Netbank No. 188: Issues include NC92 and an international collective of networking artists, writers, hackers, pirate broadcasters, and posterists.

Books and Catalogues

And, Miekal, Liz Was, and networkers of the 1992 Dreamtime Corroboree. *Molecular Juice Glue*. Dreamtime Village, WI: Xexoxial Editions, 1992. Netbank No. 360. Catalogue documenting Dreamtime Corroboree and NC92.

Del Prete, Raimondo, and Franco Santini. *The Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress at Vada*. Vada, Italy: Del Prete and Santini, 1992. Netbank No. 494. Congress theme was "Peace and many discussions related to the war in ex-Yugoslavian republics." Statements, exhibition photographs, and list of participants are also included in the Vada Congress catalogue.

Francois, Charles. *A Networking Operation*. Liege, Belgium: Charles Francois, March 21–22, 1992. Netbank No. 366: Congress pamphlet documents telecommunication project connecting two events; La Norme Et Le Caprice, Liege, Belgium, and the Netshaker Harmonic Divergence, Hanover, NH (USA)

Held, John. ed. *Fax Congress Catalogue*. Dallas, Texas: Dallas Public Library, May 2, 1992. Netbank No. 365: Section of this documentation contain Held's Bibliography of International Networker Culture and 45 networker statements.

Küstermann, Peter and Angela Pähler. *Free Personal Deluxe Net Mail Delivery Documentary Catalogue*. Minden, Germany: Küstermann & Pähler, 1993. Netbank No. 511 This scrapbook diary records Küstermann and Pähler's year-long global tourism trek. Recorded in the document are 173 DNC events in which both networkers hand distributed over 4,000 registered pieces of "netmail."

Kaufmann, Peter W. *Congress Chronology DNC '92*. Ebmatingen, Switzerland: Peter W. Kaufmann, 1993. Netbank No. 512. Written by Peter W. Kaufmann, chief NC92 congress coordinator, the handbound book includes a complete chronological listing of all correspondences Kaufmann received from 1991 to 1993. Over 250 congress sessions are listed as are the names of nearly 200 networker contacts.

Maggi, Ruggero. *Photographic Report of the Metanet Congress 1992*. Milan, Italy: Milan Art Center, March 22, 1992. Netbank No. 364: Congress document includes Gianni Broi's text about metanetworking in spirit.

Morandi, Emilio and Giovanni Strada. *Ponte Nossa Networker Congress*. Bernardino, Italy: Artestudio, May 1992. Netbank No. 367: Catalogue includes statement, stamps and lists program activities.

Nishimura, Seiei and Iida B-Ken Art Group. *1992 Autumn Sahara Congress*. Iida, Japan: Iida B-Ken, May 1992. Netbank No. 353: Documentation of *Limited Physical World 1992, Limit = Flesh Life* event (May 17, 1992), and the *1992 Autumn Sahara Congress*.

Wohlrab, Sabine, and Lutz Wohlrab. *Post-DDR-Mail-Art-Congress*. Berlin, Germany: Wahnsieblabor, 1992. Netbank No. 485: Photographs of congress participants taken at the Art Strike Café, Berlin, September 12, 1992.

Articles

Held, John. "Crossing the Cactus Curtain: Politics and Isolation Test the Commitment of Latin American Artists." *ND* 16 (1992): 37–40. Netbank No. 362: In December 1991, John Held visited mail artists in Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile from which material in this article was drawn.

Held, John. "Sustaining the HyperKulture: A Session of The Decentralized Worldwide Networker Congress 1992." *Molecular Juice Glue: 1992 Dreamtime Corroboree* (August 22, 1992): 6–9. Netbank No. 360: Diary of the networker congress at Dreamtime Village, West Lima, Wisconsin.

Nikonova, Rea. "In Eysk, America, Italy…" *Near Azov Steppes* (April 4, 1992) 55:1 Netbank No. 368: Russian newspaper article explaining Rea Nikonova and Serge Segay's *Metanet Performance and Congress* held in Eysk Museum, Eysk, Russia.

Plunkett, Daniel and Crackerjack Kid. "Crackerjack Kid." *ND* 16 (1992): 41–43. Netbank No. 362: Interview of the Crackerjack Kid by Daniel Plunkett. Dialogue focuses on books and networker projects organized by Crackerjack Kid from 1978 to 1992.

Welch, Chuck. "Art That Networks." *Whole Earth Review* (Summer 1992): 126–127. Netbank No. 369: This article focuses on the *NC92 Telenetlink Congress*. Also listed are all the networker congress organizers' addresses and some reference listings.

Computer Discs

Kid, Crackerjack. *Networker Databank*. Hanover, NH: Crackerjack Kid, 1992. Computer disc, Microsoft Word, Version 3. Netbank No. 420: All documentary entries for the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992 are listed on one disc.

Francois, Charles. *NC92 Rat Sessions*. Liege, Belgium: Charles Francois, 1993. Computer disc, MacroMind Director, Version 2. Netbank No. 495: Situated in a whimsical outer-space environment, viewers are enticed to open three networker congress files, Nos. 17, 19, and 20 (*Bonzai Congress*, Dec. 20, 1992; *Pig/Rat Congress*, Dec. 20, 1992; *Black New Shoes Congress*, Oct. 29, 1992), three of twenty congress "meetings" Charles Francois created during NC92.

Francois, Charles. *The Radio Network*. Liege, Belgium: Charles Francois, 1993. Computer disc, Macromind Director, Version 2. Netbank No. 510: A color postcard complete with sound effects and a note to Crackerjack Kid. Color photo on other side of postcard shows Networkers H. R. Fricker, Rod Summers, and others in a swimming pool.

Networker Databank Entries

Note: NC92 is an abbreviation of Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992

No. 5: Name: H.R. Fricker; Address: 9043 Trogen, Switzerland; Date: July 30, 1991; Item: Letter to Crackerjack Kid from H.R. Fricker discussing Crackerjack Kid's introduction of a "Metanet" concept for NC92, "I meta networker in spirit." Crackerjack Kid's response to Fricker.

No. 53: Name: Walter Alter; Address: Studio 26, 4001 San Leandro, Oakland, CA 94601; Date: September 25, 1991; Item: *Little Wally's Anathema"* floppy disc with extensive text. Alter begins, "This book was written because contemporary western and anti-western artists are in trouble, particularly those comprising the underground avant-garde. This book is a repair manual for that trouble."

No. 91: Name: Judy Malloy; Electronic mail address: jmalloy@garnet.berkeley.edu; Date: October 24, 1991; Item: NC92 Telenetlink Congress networker statement, "Although I miss sending and receiving visual, tactile mail art, I believe online environments andnetworks will be a more pervasive and lasting medium, particularly for artists who work with words, ideas, and information and who are interested in working together to broaden the art base."

No. 96: Name: Sue Harris; Electronic mail address: suephil@ped.apc.org; Date: October 22, 1991; Item: NC92 Telenetlink Congress networker statement, "We have been grappling with defining the networked environment we inhabit—how do we define the difference between the virtual and physical environments? Anecdote 1: This place is filled with black holes and Blemyaes."

No. 106: Michael J. Stotts, prison inmate; Address: No. 17829-034, PO Box 5000, Oakdale, LA 71463; Date: October 30, 1991; Item: Networker statement, "I thought I was lost on a wave of loneliness, reaching out for life, for love, and for happiness, while chasing dreams of yesterday. I didn't really see yesterday, and I haven't even found today, yet I'm trying to catch tomorrow. I seek brothers, sisters, and friendship."

No. 108: Name: Crackerjack Kid; PO Box 978, Hanover, NH 03755; Date: October 31, 1991; Item: Issue of electronic magazine, *ArtCom*, November 1991 issue, Vol. 11, No. 10: Crackerjack Kid, NC92 facilitator, is guest editor of this issue. His essay, "Telenetlinks," introduces the international telematic community to NC92.

No. 110: Name: Andrej Tisma; Address: Novi Sad, Yugoslavia; Date: November 1, 1992; Item: "Networker Statement No. 2 for the Netcong 1992." "the Yugoslavian war is a result of selfishness, extreme nationalism, lack of love, understanding, readiness for

dialogue, compromise, exchange. So, I think, if I give up my international dialogue, exchange, understanding, friendship and love, then I am supporting the war, or its cause,"

No. 115: Name: Byron Grush; Electronic mail address: (School of Art, Northern Illinois University) byron@art.niu.edu; Date: November 1, 1991; Item: NC92 Telenetlink Congress networker statement, "The present role of the networker artist is to explore, learn, and adapt to the expansion of telenetworking technology. Unfortunately, not everyone has access to Internet or Bitnet communications—so it is the role of we who have become explorers to create new ways of using existing networking processes in order to interest others."

No. 117: Name: Pomona Anupol Valero; Electronic mail address: (Carnegie Mellon University) <pvOb+@andrew.cmu.edu>; Date: November 1, 1991; Item: A Reflux Network Project participant responding to the NC92 Telenetlink Congress, "One no longer thinks of the distances that their messages, thoughts or statements travel, or the amount of days or weeks necessary for conventional networking (i.e., USPS). Rather, a networker thinks more of their participation or interaction with others on their network."

Nos. 122–123: Name: Bob Gale; Electronic mail address: well!bgale@apple.com; Date: November 7, 1991; Item: NC92 Telenetlink Congress networker statement, "My guess is that there really is a very small and fragmented arts community here online. Very infant compared to postal nets. Lots of potential though—so online we have fragmentation because 1) we're not a continuation of the 'homogeneous' offline art world, and 2) the hardware/software is still at an early stage in its evolution, though mature enough to be quite usable. There is a 'flashpoint' not too far away on the horizon where the general public will become involved. We're just waiting for the right 'format'—not unlike the introduction of VHS tape."

No. 134: Name: Jeff Mann; Electronic mail address: intacc!mann; Date: November 1991; Item: Jeff Mann, director of Canada's rec. arts.fine Usenet newsgroup, explains how the NC92 Networker Databank can be listed on Matrix, a public-access UNIX bulletin board service that is accessible over regular phone lines to anyone with a computer and modem.

No. 135: Name: Anna Couey; Date: November 1991; Item: NC92 Telenetlink Congress networker statement, "It (networking) subverts the idea of authorship bound up within the solitary individual. It subverts the idea of individual ownership of the works of imagination. It replaces the bricks and mortar of institutions of culture and learning with an invisible college and floating museum."

No. 154: Name: Clemente Padin; Address: Casilla C. Central 1211, Montevideo, Uruguay; Item: Spanish text entitled "El Networker Latinoamericano-1" Included in the eight-page pamphlet is the Networker Congress invitation, a statement by Hans Braumüller of Santiago, Chile, and a text by Clemente Padin, "El Network en Latino America"

No. 158: Name: Artestudio; Address: 24028 Ponte Nossa–Bergamo, Via S. Bernardino 88, Italy; Date: December 12, 1991; Items: Poster announcing Artestudio's May 9–10, 1992 Networker Congress. Stapled assemblage of miscellaneous Artestudio congress stamps, announcements, covers, etc.

No. 159: Name: Jacqueline Wolven; Address: 2421 Elden Ave. No. 1, Costa Mesa, CA 92627-5111; Date: December 12, 1991; Item: Proposal for an NC92 Women in the Mail Congress, "All women who are interested in sharing their thoughts, ideas, creativity, and energy on the issue of 'Women in the Mail,' please feel free to express yourself! You can join this congress by sending in a piece that encompasses how you envision your role as a woman involved in the networking process."

No. 163: Name: Graciela G. Marx: Address: Casilla De Correo 266, C.P. 1900, LaPlata, Argentina; Date: December 24, 1991; Item: Networker statement and information about congress meeting, "We'll MET-a-NETWORK in the Decentralized World-Wide Networker Congress 1992. We're planning to meet with our close mail friends in 1992. It will be perhaps on April at the 'Galpon de la Loma,' in LaPlata, in the ancient playing landscape of the Compania de la Tierra Malamada, to talk about art and colon-ization."

No. 168: Name: Ruud Janssen; Address: PO Box 10388, 5000 JJ Tilburg, The Netherlands; Date: November 1, 1991; Item: Congress proposal entitled *Congress-Idea 1992*, "Since I work a lot with computers (I have my own Host-System, and the computerized TAM-Bulletin) I would like to organize a few congress computer sessions."

No. 179: Names: Marsha Anne Runner and Jimmy Runner; Address: 996 Coppet St., Fairbanks, AK 99709; Date: January 6, 1992; Item: Rubber stamped postcard for NC92 Netshaker Harmonic Divergence.

No. 191: Name: Jennifer Huebert; Address: Women's Studio Workshop, PO Box 489, Rosendale, NY 12472; Date: January 28, 1992; Item: Letter expressing desire to serve as a facilitator and organize a networker congress involving women in the project. Mailed a networker congress T-Shirt with oval logo.

No. 241: Name: Leon Bellin; Address: 1122 Maple Avenue, Evanston, IL 60202; Date: March 3, 1992; Item: Networker statement, "There are all sorts of academies in the art world which conceive of themselves as unique, and in the center of the mainstream. To acknowledge that there is something meaningful happening elsewhere, however peripheral, must imply that the academy is less important that it has thought itself to be."

No. 245: Name: Edgardo-Antonio Vigo; Address: Casilla de Correo 264, 1900 LaPlata, Argentina; Date: March 10, 1992; Item: Postcard with the inscription, "My 'physical presence' annuls the 'absence' which is my 'real presence.'"

No. 251: Name: John Held; Address: 1903 McMillan Avenue, Dallas, TX 75206; Date: May 1992; Item: "A Bibliography of International Networker Culture," a checklist of 31 books, magazines, and exhibition catalogs included in the Dallas Public Library Exhibition accompanying the *Fax Congress*, May 2–9, 1992.

No. 254: Name: H.R. Fricker; Address: CH-9043 Trogen, Switzerland; Date: March 8, 1992; Item: Correspondence: "I think that a networker congress should be more than just an exciting meetingplace for networkers. It should be a link to the whole society. We are experts in communication—personal communication. Maybe you would say that we are experts in 'spirit transfer.'

No. 267: Names: Rea Nikonova and Serge Segay; Address: Sverdlova 175, Eysk, Russia; Date: February 2, 1992; Item: Correspondence reads, "The congresses? Mail artists from the West are afraid of the journey to our country and they have not been inviting us to visit them. We don't have money, but we can go if we receive a 'private invitation.' Serge and I will perform the March 22 spirit to spirit netlink."

No. 270: Name: Rachel Kopel; Address: PO Box 371375, San Diego, CA 92137-1375; Date: April 29, 1992; Item: Postcard that states, "On Wednesday, April 29, 1992 Hollis Dixon and Rachel Kopel, two mail artists who had never met, and Hollis' friend, artist Lynn Wade, made a road trip to Pasadena, CA to see the Freedom, International Mail Art Exhibition. They are returning to San Diego filled with inspiration, addresses, and a determination to catch up on unfinished projects."

No. 273: Name: Peter Brandt; Address: Totenberg 58, D-5760 Arnsberg 1, Germany; Date: April 30, 1992; Item: A pop-up networker congress postcard.

No. 275: Name: Chuck Welch; 108 Blueberry Hill Dr., Hanover, NH 03755; Date: May 1992; Item: "Mail Art Network: Source and Flow," *Real Life Magazine* Nos. 21/22, 1991, pp. 48–52. The first art magazine publication to list the Decentralized World Wide Networker Congress Invitation.

No. 279: Item: Invitation, *Pushing The Envelope: A Weekend of Events in Conjunction with the Decentralized Worldwide Networker Congress 1992*; Dates of Congress: April 11–12, 1992. Coordinated by Robin Moore at Bookworks/WPA, Washington, DC.

No. 293: Name: Reid Wood; Address: 271 Elm St., Oberlin, OH 44074; Date: March 21, 1992; Item: Correspondence and Reid Wood's mail art show invitation, *State of Being Celebrates Cohen's BRAIN CELL and Kustermann's Personal Delivery.*

No. 301: Item: Invitation, *Freedom International Mail Art Exhibition: Homage to Christo's Umbrellas*, curated by Judith Hoffberg. Location: The Armory Center for the Arts. Date held: March 22–May 10, 1992.

No. 311: Name: Clemente Padin; Address: Casilla C. Central 1211, Montevideo, Uruguay; Date: August 12, 1992; Item: Photograph of participants in the Network Congress in Montevideo, Uruguay. Also, a summary which reads: "Stop the blockade to Cuba. End the war in Yugoslavia. Preserve the peoples and ethnics menaced of extinction. Save the environment."

No. 317: Name: Volker Hamann; Address: In Der Lehmkaul 2, D-5064 Rösrath, Germany; Date: September 9, 1991: Items; Documentation of French performance artist/painter NATO, also audio cassette of the *Liege/Maastricht Networker Congress*.

No. 319: Name: Invisible Congress; Address: PO Box 10355, Portland, Maine 04104; Date: September 2, 1992; Items: Two plastic Eternal Network ID cards; "Dear new cardholder, These cards authorize you to withdraw and circulate ideas from our collective Memory Bank. Simply insert card No. 1 into any of over 5 billion temporary site-specific installations worldwide. Punch access code—It's just that simple! The Eternal Network, at your service."

No. 321: Name: Dogfish; Address: 32351 Fairview Ave., E. Seattle, WA 98102; Date: September 2, 1992; Item: Postcard documents *Seattle Networker Congress*; "The Congress greeted the network mail carriers Peter Küstermann and Angela Pähler on their yearlong worldaround personal congress mail delivery performance."

No. 325: Name: Societe Anonyme; Address: Rue Reynier, 24, 4000 Liege, Belgium; Date: August 24, 1992; Item: NC92 Congress documentation of July 14–15, 1992 meeting of Richard Adam, (Belgium); Cecile Charlier, (Belgium); Flore Malet, (France); Baudhuin Simon, (Belgium); Société Anonyme, (Belgium); Michel Trani, (France). Photograph of participants included in mailing. Themes discussed were: Homage to the postman F. Cheval, mail art in Hauterives, why? and creation of a postal museum.

No. 330: Name: Carol Stetser; Address: PO Box 20081, Village of Oak Creek, AZ 86341; Date: September 10, 1992; Item: Announcement of a *One Day in the Eternal Network Networker Congress* scheduled for November 10, 1992; "You can participate in this congress by sending me a piece of paper 8 1/2 x 11 with your name and address and a description of your activities during the day and night of November 10, 1992."

No. 331: Name: Calum Selkirk; Address: B.M. JED, London, WC1N 3XX, England; Date: September 12, 1992; Item: Invitation to *Seizing The Media: A Networkers' Congress*, October 24–25, 1992, Bloomin' Arts, Princes Street, Cawley Road, Oxford, OX4, United Kingdom.

No. 334: Name: Ayah Okwabi; Address: Ghana; Date: September 14, 1992; Item: Photograph of NC92 congress with people of the village of Toh-Kpalime. Newspaper article explains the creation of a classroom by Okwabi and members of Operation Crossroads Africa and VOLU (Voluntary Workcamps Association of Ghana). Note states, "We had the mail art networking congress over the weekend at one of the VOLU camps in the Volta region. I introduced a catalogue from my 'population project' as a basis for explaining what the network is all about to fellow campers."

No. 336: Name: Rod Summers/VEC; Address: V.E.C., Postbus 1051, NL-6201 BB, Maastricht, The Netherlands; Date: 09-14-92; Items: Two photographs of the Antwerp Zoo Networker Congress organized by Guy Bleus; Networker Congress report of the *VEC Congress* in the volcanic crater Viti (Hell), the *PTT Museum Congress* in The Hague, The Netherlands, the *RAT/VEC Congress* from Liege, Belgium to (*Heaven*) Maastricht, the Netherlands, and the *Antwerp Zoo Congress* in Antwerp, Belgium.

No. 342: Name: Peat O'Neil; Address: Box 65054, Washington, DC 20035; Date: September 24, 1992; Item: Networker statement; "To be one, a networker commits to turning information or goods to the next likely or needy person. Information broker, catalyst of energy in the realm of nature. Thus, I might meditate over a patch of ground while walking, and receive involuntary information, sensory response as a human, out and at one, with nature."

No. 344: Name: Rene Joseph; Address: 719 10th St. So., Minneapolis, MN 55404; Date: September 12, 1992; Item: *Spirit Netlink Performance*, "I draw on my own, then send it out into the world. I don't want personal contact. I want to see what happens when I communicate in an arbitrative, but strictly visual way."

No. 347: Name: Peter Küstermann; Address: Minden, Germany; Date: September 23, 1992; Item: "Hair Art and Net Mail" written by Peter Küstermann, an article explaining his *Free Personal Net Mail Deluxe Delivery Service*, a year long project which is a part of the networker congress. Also included is Küstermann's collaborative interaction with *Hair Art Project* by Japanese networker Mayumi Handa.

Nos. 348–349: Name: Nenad Bogdanovic; Address: S. Markovica 41, 25250 Odzaci, Yugoslavia; Date: October 14, 1992; Items: Mailed catalogue documentation of the August 18, 1992 *Odzaci, Yugoslavia Networker Congress* , "Participants of the congress were Nenad Bogdanovic, Aleksandar Jonvanovic, Dobrica Kamperelic, Ratko A. Radanovic, Jaroslav Supek and Andrej Tisma. All six artists accepted the suggestion of the organizer, Nenad Bogdanovic, that the content of their performances be the justification of its theme, "Make Art—Not Politics."

No. 497: Names: Andrej Tisma, Crackerjack Kid, Livia Cases, and Metallic Avau. Papers, interviews and correspondence circulated among these networkers regarding the international embargo of Serbia. Correspondence exchange between C.J. Kid and Andrej Tisma centers on the controversial anti-embargo congress and declarations made by Serbian networkers at Sremski Kalovci. Also included is Vol 2, Issue No. 1 of *Netshaker* in which Andrej Tisma's "In War And Under Blockade" appears. Crackerjack Kid's "Networkers and Blockades" follows as a rebuttal to Tisma's essay.

No. 499: Name: Charles Francois; Address: Quai Churchill 35, 4020 Liege, Belgium; Date: April 5, 1993; Item: A *Pig/Rat Congress* session report written by Francois documenting his meeting with Baudhuin PigDada Simon on December 17, 1992. The event was recorded on a 35–minute video tape.

No. 501: Name: Joki; Address: Postbox 2631, D-495 Minden, Germany; Date: June 3, 1993; Item: *Smail Global Network Zine* Issue No. 1. The premier issue of *Smail* sets forth artists' stamp themes relating to the networking culture. Featured are vignettes of Vittore Baroni and H.R. Fricker's stampart. Stampworks represented are by Gerard and Fernand Barbot, State of Being, David Cole, Peter W. Kaufmann, Marcello Diotallevi and others.

No. 506: Name: Reid Wood; Address: 271 Elm St., Oberlin, OH; Date: August 19, 1993; Items: photographs of Art in the Mail exhibition and congress at Stocker Center Gallery, Lorain County Community College, Elyria, Ohio. Exhibition brochure included with a note from Reid Wood.

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ETERNAL NETWORK INDEX

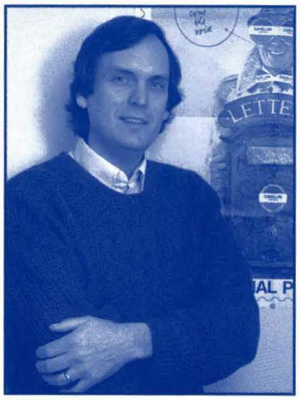
ETERNAL NETWORK
A MAIL ART ANTHOLOGY

ETERNAL NETWORK is the first university press publication to explore the historical roots, aesthetics and new directions of contemporary mail art in essays by prominent, international mail art networkers from five continents. This forty-chapter illustrated book examines the free exchanges and collaborations of an international community whose mailboxes and computers replace the museum, where the address is the art, and where "mail art is not fine art, it is the artist who is fine." Readers will find numerous photographs of mailed artifacts, performance events, congresses, stampsheets, posters, collages, artists' books, visual poetry, computer art, mail art zines, copy art and rubberstamped images.

The book is divided into six parts: Networking Origins, Open Aesthetics, New Directions, Interconnection of Worlds, Communication Issues and Ethereal Realms. Appendixes include mailing addresses, mail art exhibitions, a listing and location of over 350 underground mail art magazines and a comprehensive record of public and private international mail art archives.

Edited by Chuck Welch, longstanding mail artist and writer, ETERNAL NETWORK is an illustrated philosophy threading its course through the fabric of networking theories, ethics and values from 1960 to the present. Artists, non-artists, students and scholars are invited to corresponDANCE with global village artists who quickstep beyond establishment boundaries of art. The texts, proposals, poetry, parables and visions of ETERNAL NETWORK are a testament to the future of alternative art and the role of artists as networkers.

Chuck Welch has been an active participant in mail art since 1978. He is an educator, papermaker, writer and visual artist whose first book *Networking Currents* (1986) is a pioneering text about mail art subjects and issues. His current edition *Eternal Network* represents five years of extensive research and collaboration.





ISBN 1-895176-27-1